

South Side Story

Laura Barreca
Pelin Uran

Laura Barreca: Pelin arrived from Istanbul on a still-hot September day. Our “journey” to discover the artists from Naples, Palermo, and Rome began on the third floor of the Palazzo delle Arti di Napoli (PAN) during a beautiful Neapolitan morning. We spent four days viewing the work of over thirty artists through many meetings and conversations, mainly thanks to the cooperation of the three major museums of the city. The idea of involving the head offices of PAN, Palazzo Riso, and MAXXI was born from the desire to experience the synergy between curators and artists along with contemporary art institutions, as well as to regard museums as “open spaces” and not as mere containers of works. Contemporary museums combine the role of place for promotion and cultural activities, of interaction and artistic production, where even the youngest artists have the opportunity for exchange, in this case, even with the presence of a foreign curator. We translated the selection of artists for the Premio FURLA 2009, both as an occasion of knowledge for us, Italian curators, and as an opportunity to dialogue with the five foreign curators that we invited to participate in the project. For my part, I intended to turn our attention to this reconnaissance to Southern Italy, in cities that I know and work in, and that—just for geographical reasons—are often regarded as places that are far from the art system. We organized meetings at the three museums, contacting Julia Draganovic, Art Director of PAN, Anna Mattiolo, Director of MAXXI-Arte, and Antonella Amorelli, of Palazzo Riso. The people participating in the intense days of our *South Side Story* (editor’s note: a title thought up by Giacinto Di Pietrantonio) had an active role and were helpful, which made our little “grand tour” a very interesting experience, indeed, I would say unique.

The Gold of Naples

The days spent in Naples were intense, chaotic, and enjoyable: we called artists who live and work not only in that city but also in other places. Adriana Rispoli and Eugenio Viola—two energetic Neapolitan curators that participated in the meetings and introduced the Neapolitan artists to us—have kindly helped us. At PAN, we were allowed to use the meeting room, which was our “outstation” for three days.

Cesare Pietrouisti was the first one to meet. He told us about his artistic experience, about the crucial moment of transition to performance, about his interest in working on the boundary between the public and the private, always with the idea of challenging the rules of the art system, of economics, of society. We were impressed by the depth of his thought, his intellectual integrity, the brilliant oddness of his actions, and the participatory manner of his performances.

The outline of the meetings was thorough. Eugenio Tibaldi’s drawings showed us the anthropological studies of Varcaturro, on the outskirts of Naples, a no man’s land at the mercy of all sorts of private communication initiatives. The image of decadence returns in an ironic and noir way through the works by Walter Picardi and by Vincenzo Rusciano. The iconic and hyper-contemporary images of IABO scratch both the walls of Naples and the minds of Neapolitans, with biting sarcasm. His video, *Batt’e’mann*, shows the Neapolitan version of a superhero that only asks for trouble. Among the other works, the Pennacchio Argentato duo showed us—with disarming cheerfulness—the issue of garbage, by making three youngsters dance to the beat of the twist on a colorful sea of trash. The debunking *vis evitently* belongs to the Neapolitan soul as well as to the work by Roxy in the Box, who shows the criticism of contemporary society in an ultra-pop



Loredana Longo
Explosion #15, The Wedding Feast, 2007
Courtesy SACS/Riso, Museo d'arte contemporanea della Sicilia, Palermo

version. The dreamy tone of Maurizio Elettrico’s stories took us to a timeless and ancestral dimension.

The South seemed to be closer through Domenico Antonio Mancini’s project: the public could move there thanks to a special office, activated during the exhibition *Dai tempo al tempo* held in the town of Guarene d’Alba. We ended the day with Rosy Rox and Anna Fusco, who welcomed us in the late afternoon in their studios in an aristocratic residence located in the historic center of Naples—which they share with Keller, an architecture office—between the whips embellished by crystals, skillfully made by Rosy

Rox, and the dark but beautiful images of Anna Fusco. Besides their curious philosophical and digital processing, we discovered that Bianco & Valente are also two excellent cooks, who nourished us at the end of the day in their home studio. Our journey continued even more South.

South, South towards Palermo

When we arrived in Palermo, we were welcomed by Antonella Amorelli, of Palazzo Riso, and by Cristiana Perrella, head of S.A.C.S., a window for young artists as well as an initiative that allows a constant updating, monitoring, and promotion of the work by Sicilian

artists. First, we met the Canecapovolto duo, who explained to us how a sharp political eye is shown through their audio and video works. The spontaneous irony of Adalberto Abbate's photographs shows us a lenticular view of reality, by reproducing images of great visual and emotional impact. From the same generation, Fulvio Di Piazza and Andrea Di Marco are painters of a "Palermo school" that has never existed, a concept followed by some Sicilian artists who share their passion for painting, but each one with a deep artistic individuality. The paintings by Fulvio Di Piazza, with their unique style, are the genetically modified result of a highly refined technique combined with an exaggerated baroque style. In the works by Domenico Mangano, we could appreciate the sensibility—and simplicity—of his first videos through his lucid criticism to current events and his concern with the problem of social alienation and indifference. Moving into the heart of the city, we arrived in the bizarre "art district" of Vucciria and reached Piazza del Garraffello, set up by the Austrian artist Uwe Jäntsch, where there stands the imposing building in which you can find the Francesco Pantaleone gallery and, a floor below, Alessandro Bazan's studio. The rooms of the building—worthy of some of the most beautiful sceneries of Luchino Visconti—welcomed us in a surreal evening that we spent in company of Andrew Mania, an English artist, host of the gallery and author of a solo exhibition that opened a few days later. It was Sunday morning, and together with Paola Nicita, a curator and journalist, we took Pelin and Andrew around the antiques market of Piazza Marina, where we bought *cannoli* and *arancine*—typical of Sicilian cuisine—to sanctify the end of our visit to Palermo.

Rome, Open City

The prolific Sicilian art (and not only that) dazed us. A fifty-minute flight took us to our last stop. We arrived in Rome and, unfortunately, it was raining. Our meetings were held at the Museo H. Andersen, the temporary location of MAXXI until the imminent opening of the new museum designed by Zaha Hadid. Anna Mattirollo accepted our request to see the Roman artists, symbolically "opening" the doors of the museum to our initiative. In the afternoon, we met Giuseppe Pietroniro, whose projects show a paradoxical vision of reality, a viewpoint that certainly feels the effects of his Roman collaboration with Joseph Kosuth. The work by Carola Spadoni shows that the loss of meaning of the image is connected with video and the dryness of cinematographic language. Andrea Salvino shows political protests through his paintings and pencil drawings. A conceptual taste can be found in the work by Alessandro Piangiamore—Sicilian by birth but Roman by choice—who manages to capture both randomness and concreteness from reality. The work by Donato Piccolo has a distinctly sculptural nature. Marco Papa's artistic and creative works are directed to an audience that is also interested in design. The only net-artist we met in our journey was Chiara Passa, who has been engaged in experiments on the web and in the creation of virtual and interactive architectures for years. Guendalina Salini—with great expressive style and small gestures—creates installations and video works that contain different stories. Francesco Arena stops time and collective memory in his sculpture-installations, like exercises for the mind against the denial of history and the past. Our journey ended among the video images by Daniele Puppi, for years in search of style for his physical actions, the so-called *Fatiche*, video installations created by combining architecture

and rhythm, a balance of forces due to the relationship between the artist and the space of the work. At that point, we concluded our reconnaissance. It was time to stop and reflect.

Laura Barreca and Pelin Uran: Why Giulia Piscitelli?

Giulia Piscitelli's interdisciplinary approach, influenced by the experiments of happenings and body art, takes the form of performances, photographs, sculptures, and videos. Her videos recall the early conceptual videos of the 1960s, for which artists recorded ephemeral projects such as performances or moments from their daily lives in front of a camera without an audience.

Giulia Piscitelli impressed us because her work is direct, immediately understandable, cruel and poetic at the same time, and because words are not worth enough. It is the image that conveys concepts and ideas, which pass across visual expressions, shapes of objects created by the artist and debunking gestures that make the audience get involved. Giulia works on the conceptual shift of the object, from its existence and functionality in the world to its becoming a metaphor or a paradox. A mattress painted silver becomes a relic while a ladder is a seat. Life is a challenge.

Pelin Uran: Why focus on the process rather than the end result . . . ?

If a curator favors process-oriented art-practice, this does not necessarily imply that he follows the same strategy in his curatorial approach. A process-oriented approach demands time and energy, which are scarce resources in the super-fast art world. However, the results are vastly rewarding. Laura Barreca and I gave ourselves ten days to do studio visits in the Southern part of Italy without the stress of focusing solely on

the idea of selecting an artist for the Premio FURLA. We both utilized this time and space in different ways: I, more in terms of expanding my familiarity with art production in the South and Laura undoing her familiarity with the region with the help of local curators, institutions, and museums. We also used a certain amount of space and time (however limited) for discussion and conversation with all the artists we visited. These building blocks of the project allowed us to explore further possibilities. For me, this was a way to bypass the **biggest challenge**: *How to say something meaningful in a place where I've spent only a brief time while acknowledging the fact that I'm a stranger, a foreigner, that I'm too far away to understand anything deep enough?* If only I could understand what made us feel closer to the artist that we'd chosen—given the brief time for reflection—and what could free us from our preconceptions, then our experience would make sense.

We would like to thank:

Antonella Amorelli, Elena di Majo, Julia Draganovic, Anna Mattirollo, Paola Nicita, Anne Palopoli, Francesco Pantaleone, Cristiana Perrella, Adriana Rispoli, Mirtilla Rolandi Ricci, Monia Trombetta, Marina Vergiani, Eugenio Viola, and all the artists.

Giulia Piscitelli

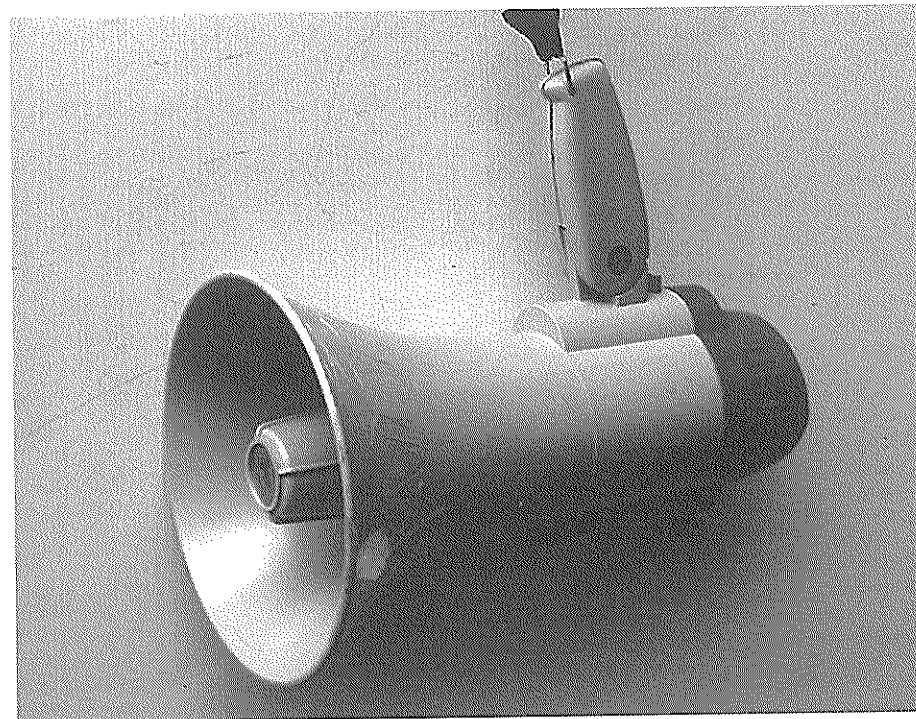


pp. 90-99

signor Z / Mr. Z, 2008

progetto per il Premio FURLA 2009 / the project for Premio FURLA 2009

Courtesy l'artista / Courtesy the artist



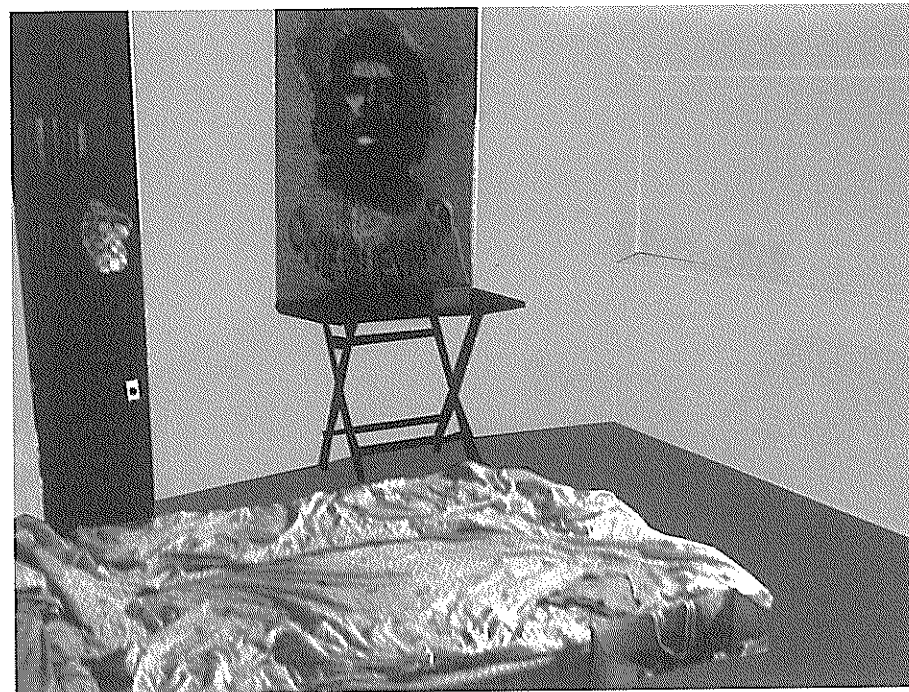
Signor Z / Mr. Z

Ho un'ora, un'ora di tempo. Tempo reale.
Quanto costano la mia vita, i miei pensieri, i miei gesti, i miei oggetti;
e quanto questi realmente mi appartengono.
Un'ora di tempo, un'ora di tempo reale.
Quanto costa la vita del signor Z, quanto costano i suoi ideali,
la sua immagine, i suoi oggetti.
Telefono al signor Z e glielo chiedo, e gli chiedo anche se vuole
vendermi la sua vita.
Chi è il signor Z?

I have one hour, one hour of time. Real time.
How much do my life, my thoughts, my acts, my objects cost?
And how much do all of them really belong to me?
One hour of time, one hour of real time.
How much does Mr. Z's life cost?
How much do his ideals cost? His image, his objects?
I phone Mr. Z and I ask him, I ask him even though he wants
to sell me his life.
Who is Mr. Z?

È un uomo di trentanove anni, nato a Napoli, celibe
 con un figlio.
 Perché scelgo il signor Z?
 Perché ha cercato nella sua vita di non dividere mai
 i suoi pensieri, i suoi principi-ideali dal proprio corpo,
 con la coscienza che tutto ciò ha un prezzo.
 E il prezzo non è sicuramente quello che io
 gli propongo nel vendermi la sua vita.
 Quali sono i pensieri del signor Z?

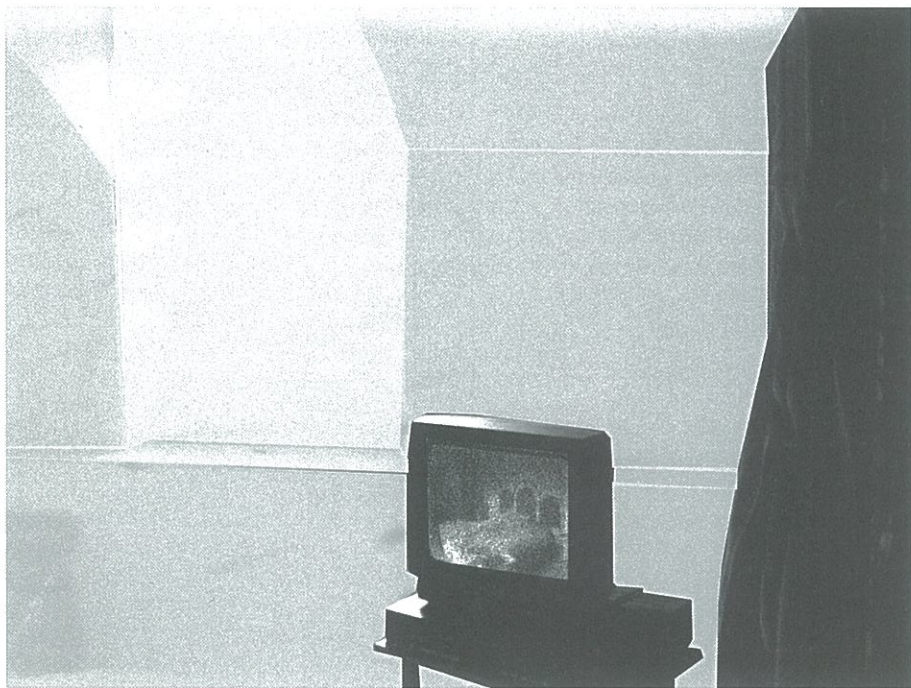
He is a thirty-nine-year-old man, born in Naples, unmarried,
 and with a son.
 Why do I choose Mr. Z?
 Because I tried, in his life, to never share his thoughts,
 his principles/ideals from his own body,
 knowing that all this has a price.
 And the price is certainly not the one
 I propose to him in selling me his life.
 What are Mr. Z's thoughts?



I suoi pensieri costantemente lavorano
 sulla necessità di vivere al presente, nella realtà,
 ogni singola cellula si interroga: quanto sono io e
 quanto un riflesso di ciò che è fuori da me.
 Per non perdersi a cosa si è agganciato il signor Z,
 visto che per lui l'arte è troppo irrealista e non può appartenergli?
 Si è agganciato negli anni Ottanta al gruppo ultras dei Fedayn
 della squadra di calcio del Napoli. In quegli anni essere
 Fedayn (che in arabo significa *devoto*, usato dai militanti
 della guerriglia armata palestinese) significava
 sostenere ideali sociali di sinistra.

His thoughts constantly work on the necessity to leave the present,
 in reality, each cell asks itself: how true is it that it is really me,
 and how much am I a reflection of what there is outside of me?
 In order not to lose himself, what did Mr. Z get himself into?
 He got into the 1980s Fedayn "Ultras" group
 of Naples' soccer team.
 In those years, to be "Fedayn" (in Arabic it means "faithful,"
 a term used by the militants of Palestinian military troops)
 meant to support communist ideals.

Allora gli chiedo:
quanto costa la stoffa
dove c'è stampato Che Guevara;
quanto costa il mobile che ti porti dietro
da quando sei nato
perché ti ricorda tuo padre che non è più vivo;
quanto costa l'armadio senza una porta perché è così che ti piace,
con una cima di nave appoggiata sulla porta restante
e che non deve mai spostarsi;
quanto costa la foto allo stadio dove tre piccole frecce rosse
indicano che tra tutta quella gente
c'eri anche tu;
quanto costa la coperta del Napoli
che ti ha regalato tuo figlio quando era piccolo,
e dalla quale non ti separeresti mai;
quanto costa questo letto dove non riesci a dormire
se non da solo;
quanto costa la tua televisione
che riflette il tuo sonno.



Se mi dai un prezzo, posso comprare queste cose,
quello che non posso comprare è il prezzo che tu paghi
per essere quello che liberamente sei.