

GOWEN CONTEMPORARY

GENEVA, Switzerland

GINO SABATINI ODOARDI

Tra Le Pieghe (Between the Folds)

6th June – 23rd August 2013

Quel Piegare è Amor, Quell'è Natura

(Dante, *La Divina Commedia. Purgatorio, Canto XVIII*)

Gowen Contemporary is delighted to announce the first individual exhibition in Switzerland by the Italian artist Gino Sabatini Odoardi. The exhibition, co-organised by Laura Gowen and Alessandra Anzini, presents the artist's most recent works: sculptures, installations and drawings that interact through the white, sinuous and cold surface of thermoforming, on which a black pencil line sometimes appears and which is 'accidentally' cut off by a red fold.

These last works are the fruit of research carried out over many years, spent alongside artists such as Fabio Mauri, Jannis Kounellis, and Carmelo Bene and fuelled by countless critical reading. Sabatini Odoardi's language has evolved, as the style changes, until appropriating the technique of thermoforming polystyrene that makes him a mature artist with a unique mode of expression in the Italian and international art world. This technique derives directly from 'sottovuoti' ('under vacuum') that the artist conceived twenty years ago in transparent plastic and enabled the hibernation of certain objects for him. Thermoforming enables the artist to cancel out the 'retinal noise' of colours caused by transparency, by using white, black or red polystyrene. The work takes place in three phases: the heating of the plastic material by rising temperatures, the union of the object with the polystyrene in its elastic form through the aspiration of the air and the cooling that imprisons the object in an irreparably solid state. This process is completely manual, the sculpture takes shape slowly, thanks to unique and precise gestures that cannot be replicated or rethought. The object hidden and revealed by this thermoforming process is blocked and revitalised at the same time, in its constant tension to return to the world. A constant ambition in Sabatini Odoardi's art: to wrench away as much as possible from oblivion that he abhors.

Combining refinement and a tactile smooth design, Sabatini Odoardi's aesthetic sensitivity is in stark contrast with his provocative and sacrilegious themes. The ground seems to constantly slide beneath us for his intention is clear: to awaken doubt, to question reality, to upset the balance on which our culture is founded, in a game of confrontation without an answer. Targets to his attacks, traditional thinking and the constant need of human beings to be reassured faced with the unknown. Life and death, God and agnosticism antitheses have a transversal presence in his work at the boundary between the sacred and the profane. Repetition becomes ritual, defiance, and the modular form as well as in series amplifies and strengthens message and rhythms, with an obsessional and seductive strategy. This is the case with his large installations, such as *Perdersi Dentro un Bicchier d'Acqua* ('To Get Lost In a Glass of Water'), 2001, *Si Beve Tutto Ciò Che Si Scrive* ('We Drink All That We Write'), 2002 and *Senza Titolo* ('Untitled'), 2013, as part of the exhibition. The 21 "sublimated," individually hand-moulded rags in this installation are not related to an object and create rhythmic and modular play, broken by a single space: a ruthless sheet deposited on the ground, that breaks with the norm and the rule of harmony.

The works presented in this exhibition stand out from the artist's previous symbolism, openly oppositional to the pre-established cultural and religious order to retell absolute and universal signs and concepts. Folds and hangings come alive and, in some cases, conceal traces and signs that coincide with essential elements of perception like light/obscurity, white/black and inside/outside. The hangings, in their infinite range of combinations, narrate aspects of life where nothing is clear and revealed. This concept materialises in drawings that the artist hides in the folds of the series of sculptures *Senza Titolo* (Trad.: No Title), 2013, in the gallery "crypt," drawings that only exist in their perception of the unknown.

Gino Sabatini Odoardi was born in 1968 in Pescara, in Italy. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Aquila. He lives and works between Pescara and Rome. Sabatini Odoardi has exhibited his work for over twenty years primarily in Italy. His individual exhibitions include: Configuration Art Fair, Bologna (2013); Museum of Archaeology, Cannara (Pg), Italy (2012); The Sapienza University, Rome (2007). His group exhibitions include: Palazzo Cà Zenobios, Collegio Armeno Moorat Raphaël, Venice (2012); 54th Venice Biennial, Italian Pavilion, Arsenale, Venice (2011); le Castello di Rivara, Rivara (To) (2011); Palazzo Lucarini Contemporary Art Centre, Trevi (PG) (2010); Artissima 12, Oredaria Gallery, Lingotto Fiere, Turin (2005). Works by Sabatini Odoardi are found in the collections of Sapienza University Museum of Contemporary Art MLAC, Rome; MUSPAC, Experimental Museum of Contemporary Art, L'Aquila; MAAA, Museo delle Arti, Castello De Sterlich-Aliprandi, Nocciano (Pe). The artist was awarded the *Young Creators Prize* by the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris (1999); the *Premio Unione Latina*, Rome (2003) and the *Premio Celeste*, special mention, San Gimignano (Siena) (2005).

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