

FAMILY CAPITALISM OR CAPITALIST FAMILY - CENTRIC SOCIETY

by Emanuele Rinaldo Meschini, in TSORPM #7, Paris, 2022, pp. 19-21

This is not the first time that an artist works on the topic of collecting, and it won't be the last since collecting is human, and it represents, to some extent, humans' most diabolical act of perseverance. In Luca Resta's work—and by work meaning the overall poetics of his production—the theme of collecting and its taxonomic rigor is constantly and ironically overturned by what the artist collects. The very nature of the objects. Resta showcases—at times on pedestals—what is normally crushed, destroyed, pressed, and sometimes even recycled. Resta's statement, however, is neither a metaphor for recycling nor a moral suggestion for how we should live our condition as subject-consumers. It is instead a reflection on time; that kind of reflection that has always accompanied those artists who can do nothing but be themselves. Those artists who wonder if their works will survive, if they will survive their works, and, above all, if they will survive thanks to their works. I imagine Monet obsessively painting the same object all day long, and the only thing that marks the difference between one painting and another is the passage of time. Resta gives a different temporality to the death of these objects by removing them from the normalized process of recycling intended as a process of making room for future purchases (therefore, a practice deeply rooted in the logic of capitalism). Placing objects in the eternal space of a collection, Resta rescues them from their certain death. Here we can perceive an echo from Derrida's theory of continuity "life death", written without any hyphen or conjunction but only with a marked silence that eliminates any binary results or any dualistic binary opposition. All that by its nature falls within the notion of disposable—such as, for instance, sliced ham packaging, plastic bottles and the tiny forks for eating chips—finds a new dimension thanks to Resta, one that the very nature of their death has always denied them. In so doing, Resta gives a temporal location to the disposable object, one that it would not have otherwise. Indeed items go beyond that nature of their death—since disposable objects are designed to be disposed of and thrown away—entering a time flow. The dimension of temporal flux is threefold. The past, through the reconstruction of memory—what an object was (for example, the chip fork for French fries cones in Amsterdam). The present, that is, what the object has become today—a carillon—and finally the future. What this object will become: a work of art, perhaps held in a museum's collections. Time does not flow if we do not go through it, and this time has been lived and used by many since Resta's collections do not include mirabilia or exotic rarities. The objects he collects are our scum, our waste, an (un) organic debris in whose non-vital life we participate. In those objects, there is an indistinct jumble of collective and individual memories where the individual is nothing else but the multitude of subjects through which they have passed. From the making to the packaging, from their sale to their disposal, Resta's objects have crossed the lives of many but have never really been in anyone's life. After all, who can grow fond of a plastic water bottle if it is so "useless" that it is often forgotten in backpacks before every security control at the airport? These objects, moreover, do not attract us, no kind of fetishism is applied to them; on the contrary, they repel us. We abandon and leave them as soon as we can, and Resta's collections can be seen as small orphanages for meaningless objects. Containers that have no family. This concept of the family, after all, is what prompted me to write this text in the first place. Starting from the transformation of ham packaging (of sliced meat in general) into an artwork, I wondered where the history is. Where the face and the ontological sense of this potentially infinite production is? I found a partial answer precisely in the concept of family. In the Italian culture, the domestic dimension of the family—which is at the same time a sign of identity and a pillar of the national stereotype—represents a sort of political

counter-order as well as a real oikonomia, the domestic economy that, for example, sets the foundations for living on Thomas Moore's Utopia Island. In Italy, the family is also one of the forms a company can take—and here I am not referring to Adriano Olivetti's enlightened community vision—in the most commercial and consumerist sense possible, especially when it comes to food. There is such a deep bond between family and food that one of the largest Italian companies, the renowned Barilla, has been identified for years with the slogan "Where there is Barilla, there is home" (Dove c'è Barilla c'è casa). And indeed, through its commercials, the company tried to shape and preserve—in a subliminal identity process—the so-called traditional family, up to the "Barillagate", in 2013. There, the president of the company, Guido Barilla, stated during a radio interview that he would never have commercials with homosexuals, "because we like the traditional family. If gay people disagree, they can always eat pasta produced by another brand. Everyone is free to do what they want as long as they do not bother others." Today, Barilla has established itself among the best gay-friendly companies acknowledged as such by the most prominent LGBTQ association, and the company's president gives talks on the importance of love in universities. Even the ideology—that of Barilla and of all those who initially contested it—melted under the dazzling sun of capitalism. Above all, since Barilla was more than a company—it is a family—everything was forgiven. A revisited version of the Prodigal Son. No matter what we do, we can always be welcomed home. And here comes the disposable family of salami and ham, bresaola and cooked turkey. In the society of the multitude, a family's individuality becomes one of the strongest tools of capitalism and, thus, the various Mr Rovagnati, Negrini, Raspini, Beretta, Citterio are not asked to offer a quality product but the—presumed—ethicalness of their genealogy.

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