

TURNING TRIVIAL GESTURES INTO PERFORMANCE. OBSESSIVE REPETITION, METAPHORE OF HUMAN ALIENATION.

by Alessia Ballabio, in INSIDEART n° 112, Rome, 2017, pp. 42-47

Luca Resta (1982) was born in Seriate, but has been working and living in Paris for a few years. His performance *Superposition* reached Talent Prize 2017's finals. Resta's art research is eclectic: through sculpture, installation and sound, the artist explores the notion of repetition and its relationship with the present. «I'm interested in the notions of the series, reproduction, temporality and mechanical reiteration, as well as the processes of accumulation, collection, and cataloguing intended as empirical devices of layering and manic addition. By using them as instruments of analysis, whose rules I isolate, I try to extrapolate the intrinsic aesthetic and conceptual potential». Resta works with objects, resorting to their narrative potential: «Using sculpture as a starting point I got closer and closer to the concept of repetition, which today I conceive not only as an impulse from the inside, but also as a phenomenon distinguishing society. I'm fascinated by the aesthetic and stylistic potential of objects, which I have always regarded as the essential subject matter of my collections. My heuristic process allows me to reach a certain level of abstraction, of functional and formal decontextualization, which turns those elements into metaphorical images, theoretical objects for critical research». This argument is reflected in several of Resta's works, in which an exasperated feeling of time, dilated into a mechanical, repetitive gesture, can be found. An example of this approach is *Papers*, started in 2013, which consists of quarter-of-millimeter thick marble sheets, the artist obtained by manually smoothing marble slabs of different sizes for hours. Similarly, *Utensili #2* is made of 13 marble toothpicks which the artist created himself by sanding pieces of marble for whole days. In another representative work, *Studio per una Lista #1* Resta drives the practice of cataloguing to the extreme, manually deconstructing the entire lexical structure of the French translation of Italo Calvino's novel *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*, and sorting every word in the book – punctuation included – by chapters, based on their recurrence in the text. The outcome of this effort is a new book, and eventually a sound work consisting of two computers reading the resulting text simultaneously, at a 30-minute gap from each other. The work was a site-specific installation first presented in 2016 in the deconsecrated church of San Michele all'Arco in Bergamo, within the exhibition *Babel*. In the course of the eight-hour reading, the text undergoes a slow semantic degradation. The onomatopoeic and lexical potential of the words, now reduced to their original status of sounds by repetition, scans time and creates a rhythmic, obsessive pattern in which sound engages in a dialog with the environment of the exhibition space. To the latest edition of Talent Prize, Resta submitted a performative work which exists only in the time span of its enactment, leaving behind only a trace. *Superposition*, presented last year at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris on the occasion of a project curated by Vittoria Matarrese, encapsulates a number of topics that are dear to the artist and, technically, entails a slow process of coating the exhibition space with overlays of subtle strips of paper scotch tape. «Coating an entire hall using an obsessive technique requiring strips of scotch tape sounded so absurd to me that I was immediately motivated to take it up. The origins of the work are more complex, though. It starts from an old childhood memory. When I was a child, my parents took me to visit Giorgio Morandi's museum house. The only memory I have of that day is my fascination with Morandi's painted bottles, which he coated with a layer of paint before reproducing them on canvas. In 2013 I decided to use that memory in my art: I replaced paint with scotch tape and began covering every item in my plastic bottle collection, which currently counts 1391 different pieces. Taking this effort on to architecture was necessary: I wanted to distance myself from Morandi and focus on my technique and

on the meaning of the concept of iteration». The element of time, spelled out by the repetitive mechanical noise produced when unrolling the tape, has a central meaning in *Superposition*, and almost becomes its centerpiece. Specifically, the work aims to raise a question about the value we generally assign to time: «In *Superposition* – Resta explains – my repeated gesture and the time it spells out are connected. The mechanical, rhythmic noise coming from the tape resounds constantly, hypnotically, repetitively across the space, almost like a mantra. The work carries myself and the viewers to a parallel temporal dimension, where time is not subdivided by seconds, but by the mechanical noise of that gesture». *Superposition* could be also regarded as a metaphor of the current, everyday human condition, and a paradox of society with its focus on repetition and monotony: «That work – the artist continues – starts from the deepest meaning of manual labor, by imitating the functioning of a machine. The movement somehow simulates the motion of a printer which, layer after layer, imperceptibly redesigns space. There's a reference to human condition and the paradoxes of our society, through a sublimation of mechanical action. There's however nothing functional about my gesture, except its being self-referential. Alienation intrinsic to repetitive actions is therefore detached by a simple intention of social exposure and isolated as a pure aesthetic gesture connected to the creative value of reiteration, in the meaning Deleuze intended for it». Among Resta's upcoming projects: *Fight for your right to party*, a paradoxical board game structured around the concept of sabotage, conceived and created by Autopalo (an artistic project about the contamination between art and football in collaboration with Matthew le Tissier), which will be presented in 2018 at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, during the event *Do Disturb*. That same year, the second installment of the project *The Serialist* will be held at Centro Luigi Di Sarro. The project features a series of shows dealing with the imagery of TV and web-series, curated by Giulia Lopalco and Emanuele Rinaldo Meschini.

A. Ballabio, "Trasformare un gesto banale in una performance. Una ripetizione ossessiva, una metafora sull'alienazione umana", in *INSIDEART* n° 112, Rome, 2017, pp. 42-47