

Press release

The renovated Centro d'Arte Contemporanea Ticino in Bellinzona opens on Saturday, May 15, 2004 at 5-30 pm the exhibition of Andrea Crosa, *Tsunami Richmond Helicopter View* and Damir Nikšić

After his previous show at Bernhard Bischoff Gallery in Thun, Italian artist Andrea Crosa (Buenos Aires, 1949) presents a thematic installation entitled *Tsunami Richmond Helicopter View* in two exhibition rooms of CACTicino.

His formal language takes its origins from the *Shaped Canvas* painting influenced by some categories like architecture and urbanism, such to give the effect of a surface made out of a dialogue between virtual bi- and three-dimension. The main subject is the human being as absence. The city, mental projection on Museum walls, is deserted. The first exhibition room showing "out of doors" views and the second one featuring furniture immobilized in a sort of aerial and suspended vision, provoke some questions within the visitor: is everything so calm as it looks, as the rational architectures and the soft colours pretend to be?

In such a relational situation, to which the artist, but architect too, has had recourse, the game becomes suddenly ironic and absurd. The artistic roots of Andrea Crosa, descendant of an ancient family of Genoa, go back to his vocational training in Buenos Aires, where he was born and that was – as the artist reminds – the cultural capital of the entire Latin America in the late 50s throughout the revolution in 1966, when the army militaries replaced the government democratically elected by the president Illia.

When at Museo de Bellas Artes arrived Pop Art, Bacon and Rothko were already considered a richness for the collective consciousness. The first Happenings and the historical movement Arte Cinetica had already found their headquarter – the Istituto di Tella –, focusing on the most daring events and while local artists would already apply for the Guggenheim Award in New York.

This is a necessary forward, in order to focus on the artist's procedure, who definitely moved back to Italy in 1975.

After a period of concentration on geometrical minimalism and pop attitude, the author operates somehow on Neo Futurism and takes inspiration from Post Modernism. By putting into checkmate sculpture and architecture, he finally finds with all drama and irony of such a painting style his own personal thought about weakness of structures that mankind never stops to build up and around his personal approach to the complexity of relation-projection among creative imagery, everyday life and history of art and of individual.

The point of view and perspectives or the possible view from an helicopter justify the metaphoric choice of the title of his show at CACTicino. Andrea Crosa reconstructs the vision of a district – Richmond in Vancouver. The city is there, made of horizontal and vertical lines on the walls of the exhibition space. The shapes of the villas, slightly distant from the wall surface, painted with acrylic on canvas mounted on wood and rigorously bi-dimensional, become a sort of disturbing presence, also thanks to the shadowed profile produced on the wall by the works. The light blue coloured rectangles of the swimming pools are motionless, there's no wind slightly moving the water. The whole situation is borderline. This is the feeling Andrea Crosa aims to communicate. The small or big everyday catastrophes just happen with no advice, they wait around the corner and explode, nevertheless, upsetting the most imperturbable situations. The furniture inside

the "houses" featured in the first exhibition room, cannot be seen, everything is at its own place, protected; but it is shown with decorous discretion in the second exhibition room. The feeling of humanity is somehow frozen within the most strict radical geometries. And yet the district might be instantly and completely destroyed by the (virtual?) frightening "Tsunami. Reality or metaphor?".

The most dramatic forecasts say, the big wave coming back from the Saint Andrew's fault would collide with the Richmond district, now calmly placed on his own territory. The architectures out of perspective are painted with reassuring colours: rose, violet and orange, green and yellowish. Everything is normal, but somehow is not convincing. The soundless reality is showing the tension for the wait of an unexpected event. Have you ever felt the alarm by the perception of the noise produced by the rotor of an Canadair rescue helicopter? By hearing the noise, you already smell the fire. By the silent catastrophes of Andrea Crosa there's already the gigantic shadow of the wave, the disappearing of colours, the racket produced by the destruction of the district. This is an exhibition and this is just fiction.

Damir Nikšić (Bosnia & Herzegovina, 1970) is the second exhibited artist.

He lives and works in Tucson, Arizona and will show a selection of his work in three rooms of the new CACTicino. His video art has been shown during the previous edition of the Venice Biennial (2003) and within Blood and Honey.

The future is in the Balkans, Essl Collection, Vienna. In Bellinzona Nikšić features three video projections. His work mostly concentrates on themes related to the origins and to any realities, both cultural and ethnic, and to the wounds produced by the war in the former Yugoslavia. Apart from themes more "engagé", Nikšić develops other ones linked to the separation; those of violent division among different cultures and their consequent reconstruction.

The work entitled *Liberty* (2001), which opens the show, is a silent video work, but visually very eloquent. It is a sort of filmic icon – than just a narrative work – entirely elaborated as computer animation and made in black and white. On one wall you can see with its grandness the American Statue of Liberty, being famous for the symbolic importance this monument represents, icon of the ideals of freedom of America since the twentieth century. The technical skills – it is a video – gives to the whole work and to the represented subject a meaning of fiction and weakness. A big hand sweetly massages the statue to indicate the evident and everlasting act of male masturbation; America, the West giving pleasure to themselves.

Nikšić's sharp irony analyses the political events of the last few years within a domineering and lobbying society – the west culture – brought to a point of saturation on September the 11th, 2001. This tragic event also became a sort of device of the impossibility for different cultures to coexist; against this attitude Nikšić's answers is an icon exalting west masturbation.

With the video *Simpatico* (2001), the author performs himself, who – once finished his Muslim prayer – folds his small carpet up, puts his shoes on and begins to dance an old American song, whose effect is to sound very clumsy. Nikšić obviously compares two different cultures; the first one based on the profound, spiritual and religious belief and the second one, the West attitude, which mostly became by now a spectacular and evasive self representation.

Sweeping the Desert (2001) is a silent video, in which the character (the artist himself) begins to sweep the desert in Arizona. Desolate canyons, cactuses, sand and hot sun are the main ingredients of this absurd "narration". Similarly, in fact, is the artist's point of view about West ideal; a metaphor of the poorness of some West behaviours and its powerlessness compared to cultural differences.

Nikšić's work does not follow the clichés of a film tradition, but hybridizes with the elements related to consume and commercial video clip.

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