

**ANDREI ROITER**

Walter Guadagnini, 2014

Andrei Roiter. Inside Out

Laura Bulian Gallery, Milan

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Traveller, clown and collector are just some of the real or symbolic appellatives the critics have applied to Andrei Roiter in the course of his long artistic career, which began in Moscow during the 80s and followed via Amsterdam and New York, through to today. These are behavioural patterns and reference models that the artist recognizes and affirms – he prefers the less demanding definition “tourist” – figures which in different ways all lead back to attitudes and choices based, first and foremost, on transitoriness, a will and ability to take on reality starting out from a foundation of curiosity, on which his own changeable identity can be built.

On the other hand, the figure of the traveller, and even more so the emigrant, are an integral part of Roiter's biography; reading his work through the lens of mutability, crossing borders and fertile cultural exchange, is much more than a rhetorical exercise that draws an all too easy parallel between art and life, it means delving into one of the nuclei of his poetic language and grasping its essence. From the age of Gilgamesh and Ulysses – figures that have somehow informed our collective image on the theme of the traveller – one of the primary requirements for anyone who moves from their homeland, whether by choice or necessity, is first to compete with those who are different from them. It is on such confrontation that a new identity is built, it allows us to have a new perspective even on elements that are part of our daily visual horizon. It is not casual that Roiter operates in this manner, in most cases his paintings and sculptures are different visions of common objects, taking their cue from the most banal aspects of everyday life and transforming them into fantastic visions, inventions that lie between pun and illusionism. Gigantic cameras, planes made from sleighs, suitcases full of holes, curtains from which huge piles of books emerge, are just some of the objects that make up the artist's landscape.

It is a universe that is not content to simply appear on the pictorial surface, it literally takes shape in sculptures that are characterised by a materiality that is as simple in its components as it is fascinating in its results.

In this case too, it is not difficult to maintain that Roiter uses recyclable materials so as to highlight, yet again, precariousness: not so much that of his images but of the forms and perhaps their meanings; as if such changeable forms – one example will suffice: the house incorporated in a globe – would have no option but to correspond to a variety of possible interpretations.

In this way it seems that we can also interpret Roiter's constant recourse to irony (particular self-depreciation), as an incident in thought where the interpretation of data, a cliché, is questioned once again, and a shift in its meaning and sign is hypothesised. It is a sort of continuous game between the artist and the spectator where the latter is not so much asked to recognise a form or interpret a phrase – in most cases both are wilfully enigmatic – but rather to transport him/herself into an “other” dimension, other than that undertaken in everyday life. Perhaps this is the *Inside Out* the title of the exhibition refers to, involving not only the normal conditions of the appearance of objects in our visual and intellectual field of perception, but even an overturning of our usual perceptive and in particular intellectual habits, a sort of reversal of point of view. At this point, thinking of Viktor Misiano's exemplary reference to the “profane illuminations” identified by Benjamin, it seems to be legitimate to suggest another interpretative key related to drowsiness, to the state between consciousness and unconsciousness: a state in which the world appears in hitherto unknown and surprising forms, when it is unclear whether we are dreaming or awake, when the contours of what we see and know become blurred. This seems to be the state of Roiter's objects: his paintings in particular transpose reality onto a plane that is different from objectivity, but deliberately *not* a dream-like dimension of the surrealist type. Probably it is again the effect of irony, so that this transition is expressed in a language capable of opening a dialogue with the great tradition of the *objet trouvé*, the idea of a reconstruction of the world that is more playful and closer to the intellectual anarchy of Dadaism, which was, as we know, a movement formed mostly by emigrants and exiles...

Walter Guadagnini - Milan, 2014