



**DRAWING SPACES , Laura Bulian Gallery, Milano**

**Inauguration 11 November 2010, at 18.30**

**The exhibition will run until 24 December 2010**

**Emanuele Becheri, Riccardo Benassi, Luca Caccioni,  
Vadim Fishkin, Andrei Roiter,  
Donatella Spaziani, Stas Shuripa, David Ter-Oganyan**

**Curated by Walter Guadagnini**

Over the last decade, drawing has regained a central role it had appeared to have lost during the 1990s, when it was overwhelmed by spectacular artworks and artistic events as well as the rise of media such as photography and video, which did not seem to have any need for drawing. There are multiple reasons behind this rebirth, and the works presented here illustrate a considerable variety of approaches and motives currently being explored. Furthermore, we are dealing with two countries that have different traditions: Italy and Russia.

It is a given fact that over the centuries drawing has been “the foundation of art”: a practice in the service of a major work, whether painted or sculpted. During the twentieth century, though keeping its value as a primary idea and verification of form, it acquired ever growing expressive autonomy, to the point of taking on a role that was specific to research, becoming a fully-fledged expression in its own right. This occurred also thanks to an increasingly broader extension of the very concept and definition of drawing.

Starting from being conceived as a project done with traditional means on paper, the concept of drawing has been extended to the status of an authentic artwork, its principal feature being no longer related to the tool with which it is created, but having more to do with the support – or supports – and especially with freedom of execution and genuine spontaneity. It is no accident that drawing enjoyed a particularly fruitful period between the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies, when both conceptual researches and research into space, loosely definable as “arte povera” or “anti-form”, made drawing necessary for at least two reasons: on the one hand, the primary mental character of drawing corresponded completely with the theoretical foundations of conceptualism, and on the other, the complex process of creating installations, entities endowed with potent physicality, led artists to place drawing in a central position, at times becoming a substitute for infeasible artworks or works destined to have a very short lifespan.

The period immediately following this, though diametrically opposed, was no less significant: the so-called “return to painting” gave drawing a primary role that was closer to the traditional role and symptomatic of the exasperated subjectivity which characterised that research.

Today, in a situation such as the present, what does drawing mean to artists whose creative vicissitudes started at the end of the above-mentioned periods (Roiter, Caccioni and Fishkin), or when those periods had already passed into history (Shuripa, Spaziani, Becheri, Ter-Oganyan and Benassi)? First of all, it should be pointed out that over recent years disciplinary boundaries have been progressively and perhaps permanently weakened, so much so that shifts from one practice to another within one single research are absolutely natural: indeed, not one of the artists taking part in this exhibition can be identified by virtue of a single discipline, each one moves not only between two and three dimensions, but even between techniques that until not so long ago did not even interact. Installation, photography, computer graphics, painting, sculpture, video and of course drawing, live side by side in these researches, in a logic that is much more than mere crossing, it is

an authentic juxtaposition, safeguarding the specifics while questioning them from within. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that these years have witnessed the progressive rise of a visual culture originating from illustration and cartoon which has, in turn, contaminated every artistic expression with a narrative strain, somehow freeing the field even more for the natural and potent influence of drawing, which is the founding form of these same languages. All the above bears witness to an extremely fragmented and fragmentary cultural context, where sketches and aphorisms are worth more than ever before.

In such a condition – which could be interpreted as a sign of extraordinary freedom and experimental spirit, willing even to pay the price of the misunderstandings it might lead to – drawing takes on a particular value: it becomes the place where the relationship between manual skill and the conceptual elaboration of form are most clearly visible. Indeed, if these artists have an element in common, despite their different generations and poetic languages, it is precisely in the quest for a balance between the underlying reasons for doing, approaching techniques and materials with full awareness of their nature and a willingness to draw maximum possible expression from them, and the reasons behind mental elaboration, a desire not to give oneself over completely and indiscriminately to the allure of those materials and techniques, to elaborate them through careful consideration on their nature and why they are being used.

On more detailed examination, it is clear that the common element shared by these artists is a continuous consideration of space, the relationship created between forms and spaces, whether they be the two-dimensional spaces of the canvas or the three-dimensional spaces of sculpture or installation (or the extreme case of Ter-Oganyan, who appropriates an internally social yet virtual space such as those generated by the computer). And they may also be forms that originate from daily reality, from the concrete presence of things to which they return (as is the case for Roiter, Caccioni, Fishkin and Spaziani), or forms that lose their immediate iconographic correspondence in passing from reality to graphic elaboration (as we find in Benassi and Becheri), or even pure forms that convey a symbolic image of reality (as in Shuripa).

Often, unexpected coincidences between different researches emerge within this drawing of spaces, so that we can place Roiter's work alongside Caccioni's thanks to their common approach to reinventing reality in fantastic modes as well as a flair for gesture that might be defined as classic. Likewise, Benassi and Ter-Oganyan transform a physical experience into pure decorative pattern, while Spaziani proceeds both in the same direction and in the opposite, transforming the original decorative surface into the birthplace of a recognizable form. And the boundaries of these choice are constantly crossed by Fishkin and Becheri, who, together with Benassi and Shuripa, have the strongest ties to elaborations of real space, caught between utopia and everyday life.

All these sheets are spaces of freedom therefore, where we also find a common sense of irony, a skilful game of deception and cross-reference where the spectator is asked to participate; once again it is a question of spaces and of the shared use of a space, the gallery, which still has its *raison d'être* if it can become proactive, daring to make projects that extends beyond the boundaries of what is obvious and known.

Walter Guadagnini  
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