

## ...GLI STRUMENTI DELL'ARTE

Art often ends up closing in on itself and artists themselves think that there is nothing beyond it. But as Saramago observed with literature, art is only “a part of life, of time, of history, of culture, of society; nothing else”. In

the same way that things continually happen in life, so “the expression of what we feel and think, which can be literary, musical, pictorial, philosophical or of some other type, is the way we have of externalising our everyday hopes, certainties, doubts and ideas”. I think that Salvador Juanpere, like Saramago with his priority for human beings, concentrates on these connections between life and art as his working material. The project *...Gli strumenti dell'arte* originates from this same phrase from the poem *Scherzo* by Leopardi. It is a point of reflection on the concern of the artist with the processes of construction in his own art and methodology. Leopardi also says in *Zibaldone* that “il dilettere e l'ufficio naturale della poesia” since poetry can be useful in an indirect way, “come le scure puo segare, ma l'utile non é il suo fine naturale”.

The artistic attention of Salvador Juanpere, at least for the last five years, has focused on the creative process as a type of shelter from the process itself and also on reflections provoked by the activity to which he has dedicated his life. They concern the connections between life and art; the permanent transit around everything we do and that balance which places us between the physical (the instruments) and what we want to represent (science, space, the influence of art etc) . The art of doing becomes another instrument of thought, an instrument which helps us interpret, know and understand the world. At the same time it is a necessary conduit for receiving stimulation.

What does his artistic attention propose? More than a presence it offers the possibility of existence, because for him art situates itself as an event “beyond his communicable and constructive experience”. And it provides us with a double reading. The space of refuge -the workshop as a sealed capsule where we give time to our things and feel the need to live -and also the everyday- the things we have at hand and can imbue with the status of an art-work. In the end, he gives visibility, or an aura, to thought, to ideas more than their actual formulation, and speaks to us of “the space that could lie within our territory of needs” in a blind and contradictory world that is organised for and by the sense of seeing, as Saramago put it in his *Essay On Blindness*. A world made for eyes, incapable of comprehension beyond the material, and so lacking sense.

*...Gli strumenti dell'arte* refers to an exten-



Gli strumenti dell'arte (fragment) 2005/2006



Motor/Cor Wood and sound, 2003



Gli strumenti dell'arte (fragment) 2005/2006

sion of the body, a series of elements which become prosthesis of the need to do and end up being embodied in facts. While there is more and more of the conceptual in his work, there also exists the need to manipulate, work on and elaborate. Artistic work as a reason for living emerged in *Nel mezzo del camin* a couple of years ago when he turned fifty and meditated on his personal creative process, on the fragmentation of a life and career which is in fact a single work. A date which was of only symbolic significance, but useful for pausing at and viewing the past as the visible progression of a passionate world in which we often have the sensation of following dependent on a single interior force without external stimuli. It is a point of persistence, force of will, solid resistance where new possibilities are forever arising and everything gradually acquires meaning. That slowly pushing ourselves which allows us to recognise the things we can still say and do, a latent space with changes of register that found its metaphor in the engine of his car.

Since this train of thought which included folly, resistance, order, progression, silence to be broken, since that engine which was the end of the exhibition and

at the same time its start, since his own journey, the enterprise of Salvador Juanpere's life has been made real through these instruments of art. Instruments which are implied and refer to his tools and referents, and his method; a mental journey embodied in his journal, a place where he unloads both day-to-day life and the processes

of his thought. This project moves at different speeds and becomes the ground where the multiplicity of humankind is worked; light, portable, both quick and slow.

We can see the first evocation and absence of work in the installation *Gli strumenti dell'arte*.... It reproduces in wood, as though it were a real sculpture, all the most commonly found tools of his craft, notably electric drills, saws and polishers. The shelving is used to display them and scattered on the floor are fragments of marble off-cuts left over from previous works. The aim is to set up the idea of a frontier between what is and what is not, since the spectator is confronted with an obstacle, the absence of a work in which only the tools and the residue are left on



50 Anys (Nel mezzo del cammin...) 2003



Gli strumenti dell'arte .Wood and marble 2005

the view; that which we use to work and the traces of what we do, while the actual piece is somewhere else. This implied and absent content, based on the complicity found through works of reference, is also evident in the installation *Continents...*. Here the gaze of the spectator meets another frontier of containers, as if they were packaging boxes, continents of sculptures that, like a geographer, position us on a possible map which stretches from the time of modernity to most recent art. The inexistent content evokes those works which interest him or are related to an aspect of his own oeuvre. A head of Picasso by Gargallo from 1934, or other sculptures referring to Anselmo, Cragg, Manzoni or Beuys, could all be inside the containers which give support and protection. But these virtual containers are sculptures in their own right and do not allow us to discern the character of their contents.



*Continents...2006*

Wooden packaging units that could be used for transporting art works suggest a delineated space, that of their own presence in the world, but the idea of the container also holds the memory or spirit of each one of those works. The inside always corresponds to real dimensions and the evocation, in this case, is made by the original title and the year, written in felt letters -a protective material often

used by Beuys- positioned on the floor or on top of the containers. This reconsideration of made objects leads us to reflect on the virtual when we are presented with only the space and the time they occupy within the history of art.



*Textualitats...Wood, sentences on paper 2006*

Latent space is the origin of everything. The blank page in his diary, the immense potential of which shapes errors and doubts, becomes another installation, *Textualitats* (O com les anotacions en el diari es corporeïtzen). Salvador Juanpere tells us that the work we produce is not as important as the moment in which we live

or the recording of the mood at the moment of making it. It is the quick idea jotted down in the notebook which ends up becoming a physical object, in which the image of the text does the work of recalling a mental image. Here the virtual resides in the importance of the project, in the possibility of capturing ideas as poetic instruments, in the transformation of text as visual thought. His thoughts become three-dimensional and are present as sculpture since they are part of the process of exhibition from their inception to their public presentation. Past and future, as the measure and doubt of a coexistence, an equilibrium, also find their



metaphor in the wedges of Greek marble which are used to level the wooden structures on which the texts rest.

These three installations are complemented by others which are all metaphors for the sculptural process, in which irony appears as the backdrop to a dialogue between the everyday and cultural sedimentation. The biblical reference to money lending in *La persistència del fang* or the stolen idea we see in *Furts*, are a nod to Ortega y Gasset's words "God put beauty in the world for it to be stolen".

On May the 17th 1989 Salvador

Juanpere described sculpture as "...a metaphor between density and nothingness, a paradox between particle physics and Pygmalion, a trap set between the frontier of materials and the immensity of dreams". He manages to "naturalise the trick of playing the film backwards", because he gives us the instruments with which to dream the possibility of existing by absence and he alerts us to an important fact which Saramago observed in those eyes which, although seeing were blind to reason. We don't need an outbreak of blindness because humanity sees with eyes blind to intelligence and the artist has to push backwards to regain lost visibility; the capacity to feel and think. It doesn't matter if we use Pessoa's phrase "what in me feels is thinking" or Saramago's paraphrase "what in me thinks is feeling".



*La persistència del fang*. Wood, marble and bronze 2006



*Furts*. (Y puso Dios la belleza en el mundo para que fuera robada) 2006

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*Note: the quotations in the text are from the author's own words, a paragraph from Zibaldone by Leopardi and thoughts from Saramago's The Statue and the Stone where he reflects on his books.*