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RICCARDO BERETTA
Paravento Playground

Opening Tuesday 17 January, 7:00 pm
Until 4 March 2017

Paravento Playground, Riccardo Beretta's (1982) first solo show at Francesca Minini, features a site-specific project, in which innovative and disparate works create a uniquely suggestive atmosphere.

The main piece in the center of the space, with its dynamic lines and flowing forms, is the work *Paravento (First Victims Playground)* 2015-2017, a large-scale sculpture of inlaid wood, a metaphor for a threshold to be crossed, physical and mental at the same time. Here, the image of the playground intersects with the structure of the screen, an intimate household object, antique and old-fashioned; it is the succession of arches (traditionally connected to the act of crossing, of the passage from one space to another, from inside to outside) which in the work translates the idea of movement and evokes the moment of playing and the recollection of it.

The playground is an area with fluid lines and forms, a space designed to stimulate experiences and memories – individual and collective alike – in children, and then to become, later on, a place capable of triggering in adults memories and sensations that draw on the events of childhood.

The works *Recovered Playground* 2016-2017, on the walls, act as a counterpoint to the screen: here the adventure of playing is crystalized, frozen in a gesture that becomes a paradigm. We find these colored forms of playgrounds in the silhouettes of the wood panels; in following them our eyes retrace the same dance of children playing on slides.

The theme of the threshold, to cross - with a gaze or with the body – an architectural element, is intrinsically connected to the technique of *Terrasanta Relief*: a special negative bas-relief on sheets of wood elaborated by the artist. In Riccardo Beretta's work, this procedure becomes the record of a gesture, of a passage through matter. The sheets of wood are erased to become like the layers of an epidermis. This idea of crossing is, for the artist, also a psychic process, similar to a session of psychotherapy: as in the techniques of EMDR*, the most recent phases of thought are cleared away, letting memories surface and allowing one to cope with traumatic events.

This is also what is recounted in the series of textile works entitled *Sleeping Bag (Negative Cognition)* 2016-2017; the phrases embroidered onto the sleeping bags that make up the installation are taken from a study by the psychotherapist Cristina Mastronardi about trauma and resilience. They are the negative thoughts of young victims of abuse.

The background of the back of the screen is a black stain and from its carved surface emerge abstract colored and vaguely figurative forms. Between the two sides of the work there is a dichotomy resembling that between movement and stasis, wakefulness and sleep, consciousness and unconsciousness. Perhaps, what *Playground* represents is indeed that thin line which separates these worlds; perhaps, the sensorial aspect linked to natural woods, their varnishing, their hues and smells, is capable of stimulating memory processes.

While the front side, with its inlays and carvings, is the terrain of limpid memories, stimulated from the image of the playground, the dark backside evokes forbidden images; together, they represent a moment of realization, and, potentially, through the absorption of the trauma, of healing.

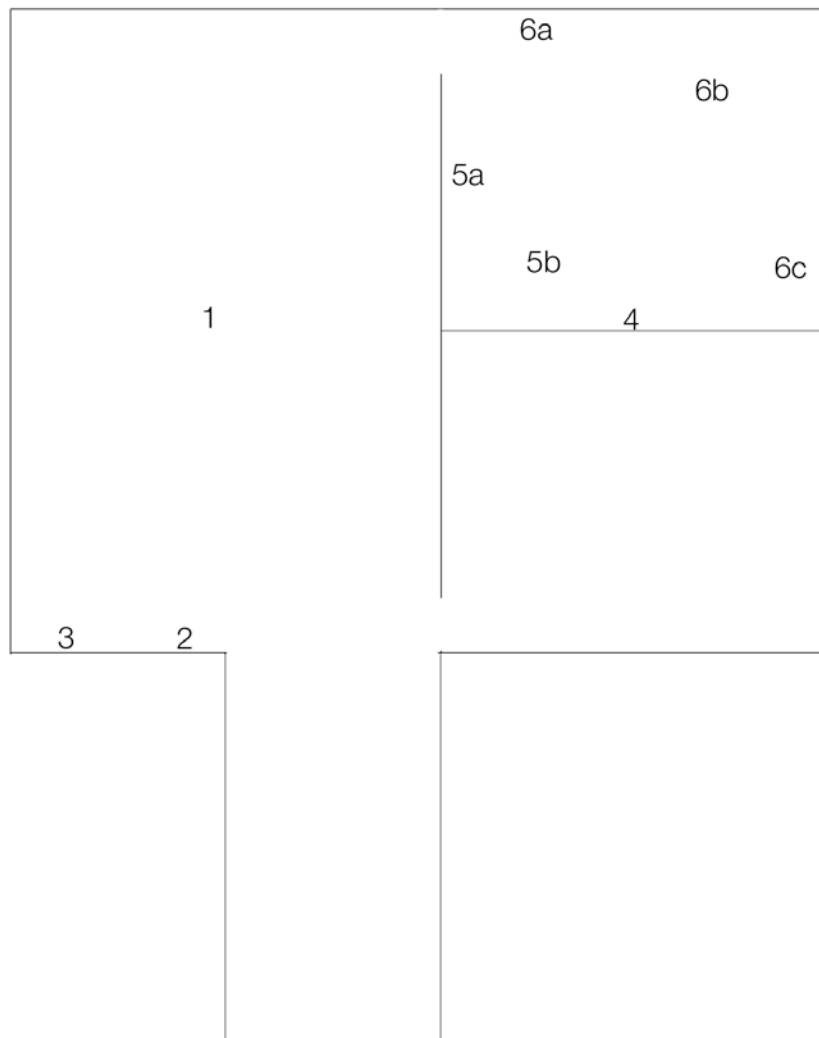
*Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is psychotherapeutic method that aims to treat various mental health disorders and problems related both to traumatic events and more common experiences that are nevertheless emotionally stressful.

Riccardo Beretta (b. 1982) lives and works in Milan. He graduated from the Accademia di Belle Arti of Brera (Milan), and has studied with Lothar Baumgarten at the Universität der Künste (Berlin).

His solo shows include: Terrasanta Relief, Plutschow Gallery, Zurich (2015), Exploiting me – Set Sound Session, MACRO, Roma (2013), Donnewetter, ZERO..., Milan (2012), I don't want to live a life of episodes and fragments, Artists Unlimited Galerie, Bielefeld (2011).

Riccardo Beretta has also taken part in important group shows and international exhibitions, including: Art or Sound, curated by Germano Celant, Fondazione Prada - Ca' Corner della Regina, Venice (2014), Cheongju International Craft Biennale, Cheongju (2013), Fuoriclasse, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan (2012), Estate, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York (2012), Prague Biennale 5, Prague (2011).

The artist has a permanent installation in the Buccellati townhouse in New York.



PARAVENTO PLAYGROUND

1. Paravento (First Victims Playground), 2015-2017
2. Recovered Playground #2, 2016-2017
3. Recovered Playground #3, 2016-2017
4. Recovered Playground #4, 2016-2017
- 5a-5b. Sleeping Bag (Negative Cognition), 2016-2017
- 6a-6b-6c. Sleeping Bag (Negative Cognition), 2016-2017