

**Ruben Montini**

## ***Where I stay with me***

Opening 7 May 2017 from 11 am to 8 pm

Until 29 July 2017

The project will be accompanied by the text “Dare ragione a Kant”, by Lorenzo Bernini<sup>1</sup>

*Hello Ruben. “Where I stay by me” is your first solo exhibition at prometeogallery, during which you present your “SOLO” project. Tell us something about yourself, your artistic practice and future projects.*

I don't want to call what I do “artistic practice” because it is truly connected to – is actually totally a part of – my life. My choice to have a home-studio, too, illustrates this continuity and continuous overlapping. The space where I live is also the space where I think and produce my work. Embroidery is the activity that, at the moment, occupies my days the most. It has historically been considered a hobby or a pastime for women when they relaxed after a day's work outside the home, once they finished housework or while watching TV. However, it is increasingly becoming an actual job, like a cathartic instrument or an artistic methodology, independently of the gender of the person performing it. I, for example, count it among my daily activities ever since I started practicing it for my performance “E' tutto qui. Dove sto con me” (2013). This “activity” became part of my everyday routine some years ago, first with an intent to quote Maria Lai and immediately afterwards, as a long performance where I tried to adopt that cliché connected to the domestic figure of the woman as my own. I brought what for many was considered a hobby to extremes, to such exasperated extremes that it fully became part of my days. Initially, I embroidered directly on Sardinian tapestry projects: instead of using them as outlines, I embroidered directly on the paper sketches that, for others, indicate the road to follow. For me they became – and sometimes still do – the road itself. They lose their meaning and their decorative goal to become a mere pretext to perform the activity of embroidery. But today, more and more often I embroider or sew on my own clothes, on my bed sheets, towels... on things that I have used and that exude the experience of my daily life. Whether they are clothes that I seldom wear to go out or some item of clothing used while actually embroidering is not important. I think they speak more about me. Maybe they don't say much and maybe there's nothing special to tell, but it's still the story of a person living in this decade. In this sense, they become archive material perhaps, or futile witnesses of stories that come and go or of *shared fears*, with their ability to fix, also visually, the story of each one of us. At the same time, I'm convinced that being able to tell my life without the artifices that history and the history of art – also Queer art – have always used, is an extraordinary political gesture because it makes everything normal. If I speak about my daily life for what it is, no one can ever interpret it as something extra-ordinary: telling a story of homosexual love in a *normal* way is politically stronger and more incisive than insisting on speaking about the issue of sexual minorities as something to be respected because different. Normalizing diversity is an incredible weapon. Indeed, what some may call my “diversity” for me is the only reality I know, hence my normality.

In a few days, I was scheduled for a performance at the University of Verona during the inauguration of the seminar “Queer(ing) Anglo/Italian Theories and Practices: critical reflection on

---

<sup>1</sup> \* Researcher in Political Philosophy at the University of Verona, Director of the centre of research PoliTeSse – Politiche e Teorie della Sessualità ([www.politesse.it](http://www.politesse.it)); author, among other works, of “Apocalissi queer: Elementi di teoria antisociale” (2013, translated in Spanish and English – “Queer Apocalypses: Elements of Antisocial Theory”) and of “Le teorie queer: Un'introduzione” (2017, to be published).

Anglophone queer theories in the Italian context and on dissident Italian thought”, organised by QuIR (Queer Italia Network/Rete) and financed by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK) in collaboration with PoliTeSse. The performance I was to present and that was unfortunately postponed is entitled MADRE and I conceived it as an extremely intimate dialogue between a (hypothetical) mother – me – and a (hypothetical) child that I will never be able to bear. A project that tells about the desire for parenting that clashes with the reality of my biological body.

The “SOLO” work that I’m presenting in the gallery’s Project Room has to do with this, too, in a way: while I work on it, sewing together all my clothes in an attempt to create a space for me, a shelter, a sort of skin in which to find refuge, I realize that if I could have children, I would probably keep some of the clothes to leave to them. Some very particular things, for example the tie I wore when I was the best man at my sister’s wedding, or the coat I bought with the first money I earned from selling one of my works. Those little things that parents save and then pass down to their children. This action of embroidering extended in time is becoming a place where to think, a place where I am with me and only with me (hence the title of the performance “E’ tutto qui. Dove sto con me”, quoting a verse from one of Italian singer Patty Pravo’s songs). Lately, I’ve come to think that this archiving of my clothes is also a sort of inventory, a tally of my closest belongings, those that I wear on a daily basis. A way to restore order, or to make a point. The same SOLO work will also have a second moment, on 17 May, when I will use it within the *SOLO (adagio)* sound performance at the Begijnhofkerk in Brussels, within the BANG! Festival curated by Joris Van De Moortel and Davide Bertocchi.

As far as future projects are concerned, I am currently working on *Questo Anonimato E’ Sovversivo*, a work in several stages beginning at the end of April at the Royal Needlework School in London and that I’m bringing to Berlin’s Museum Europäischer Kulturen in June and then, in the fall, at the MAN in Nuoro, Italy. A project that involves several institutions and several people in the course of the performance: a sort of remote collective embroidery, triggering collaboration and cooperation mechanisms between individuals who do not know one another and who will probably never meet, but in developing which I maintain a strong authorial component and whose stages are comprised of my land of origin, the city I studied in and the city I live in – all foundational places in my life.

**17 May – live streaming from** Begijnhofkerk in Brussels, within the BANG! Festival curated by Joris Van De Moortel and Davide Bertocchi.

Milan – Berlin April 21, 2017

**Ruben Montini** (Italy, 1986) lives and works in Berlin. After obtaining his degree in Visual Arts from the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice and studying at Manchester Metropolitan University, in 2010 he obtained his MA in Fine Arts at Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design in London. His artistic research mainly tells about his personal life experiences through the creation of performances and objects imbued with these experiences, contextualizing his work within the contemporary debate and the new European socio-political geographies, with particular attention to queer theories and LGBTQ minorities. He took part in several international shows, both in private and public institutions, such as: "Questo anonimato è sovversivo", Museum Erophäischer Kulturen - Berlino e MAN - Nuoro (upcoming), "Cosa Resta di Noi", CloTHINK, with Dr Wessie Ling e Dominic Smith, Northumbria University, Newcastle Upon Tyne (2016); "Lupa, Caffè Internazionale, Palermo (2016); "Pomada", Museum for Contemporary Art, Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw (2015); "Vanità/Vanitas", Museo Ettore Fico, Turin (2015); "Cosa Resta di Noi - Requiem" (solo), Oratoire du Louvre, Paris (2015); "Turtle Salon in the Forest", Fargfabriken, Stockholm; "Bienal del Fin del Mundo", Buenos Aires (2014/2015); "ArtStays", Ptuj, Slovenia (2014); "Teoremi", Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Villa Croce, Genova (2014); "Piece", Teatro Studio Krypton, Scandicci, Florence (2014); "Microutopias of the everyday" and "Theatre of Life", Co Ca Znaki Czausu, Toruń, Poland (2013/2012); "Art International", Istanbul (2013); "Piccolo Festival", University of Trento (2012); "Luce e Movimento", Signum Foundation for the Biennale of Architecture, Venice (2010); "Realpresence", Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2008), e MKG, Belgrade (2008).