

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

For immediate release

Pietro Roccasalva
The Strange Young Neighbours

February 11 — March 24, 2012

Opening reception: Saturday, February 11, 2012, 6:00—9:00pm

Live performance: Saturday, February 11, 11:00am—9:00pm

David Kordansky Gallery is very pleased to announce *The Strange Young Neighbours*, a solo exhibition by Pietro Roccasalva. The show is Roccasalva's first with the gallery, as well as his first solo gallery exhibition in the United States. It will include paintings, drawings, a neon work, and a large-scale sculptural installation that will serve as the site for a *tableau vivant* performance. The performance will take place on Saturday, February 11th, beginning at 11:00am and continuing until the end of the opening reception at 9:00pm.

Roccasalva explores the potential for art objects to become active agents of simulacrum, sites where the animate and inanimate worlds undergo profound crossing. Painting serves as the orbital center for a practice that includes sculpture, performance, and video, and that has increasingly come to represent a self-contained universe of poetic narratives and philosophical inquiries. Roccasalva has referred to his paintings as 'microchips', devices that organize an ever-expanding network of processes and allusions. Synthesizing compositional strategies drawn from religious iconography, modernist collage, and digital distortion, and skillfully rendered over months and even years, the figures in the paintings are both deeply familiar and impossibly strange. They freeze the gaze and conjure the sense that though artworks can never be fully understood, they are caught with their viewers in an endless feedback loop of exchanged signification.

The Strange Young Neighbours borrows its title from a standalone tale in Goethe's 1809 novel *Elective Affinities*. In the story, a near-catastrophic drowning plays a key role in uniting a young couple destined to be together since childhood. Though the onset of adulthood and its misunderstood passions temporarily drive them apart, when the girl jumps from a moving boat and the boy saves her, they finally realize that they are in fact meant to be married.

This tale is just one of the texts that inform *Just Married Machine*, a major sculptural installation that occupies the center of the gallery and sets the stage for a series of new paintings as well as the *tableau vivant*. A wooden boat suggests direct connection to Goethe's narrative, but the other objects suggest that additional processes are at play. In fact, the scene is also based on a still/still life taken from the short Pasolini film *La Ricotta*. Roccasalva has allowed a series of visual slippages to transform objects depicted in what is essentially a traditional *nature morte* into fully realized, life-sized objects: a shallow tray becomes the mandolin-shaped boat, an overturned basket becomes the hot air balloon, and heads of garlic are translated, via a humorous visual 'misunderstanding', into a sculpture that resembles a crown of toilets. The work's most profound slippage, however, takes place between genres as the *nature morte* is repositioned within the realm of living things. For instance, a bottle in the *La Ricotta* still life is reinterpreted as a woman; accordingly, on the day of the opening, an actual married couple will inhabit *Just Married Machine*.

The performance and sculptures trace an arc that encompasses Pasolini, Goethe, and the concept of the 'bachelor machine.' However, where the 'bachelor machine' maintains desire by prolonging a state prior to consummation, *Just Married Machine* completes a circuit by unifying *nature morte* and living couple in a single visual experience. This process is further borne out by Roccasalva's practice, in which *tableaux vivants* often become the subjects of future drawings and paintings. Meanwhile, an accompanying still life painting entitled *Study for Just Married Machine* points to this process by enacting its reversal. The work depicts a goblet and a

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traditional Italian rosetta bread, seemingly gendered objects that will memorialize the departed actors when the *tableau vivant* is over. Here, Roccasalva continues to elaborate upon polarities of male and female and the fusion of animate and inanimate forms.

Surrounding *Just Married Machine* are a group of paintings featuring a recurring character in Roccasalva's work. *Il Traviatore* (the waiter) is always depicted carrying a lemon juicer on an otherwise empty tray. In the context of this exhibition, he is also the figure that bears witness to the elaborate coupling of genres that takes place before him. But because Roccasalva distorts, blurs, and deconstructs his face and body, the waiter's surreal fragmentation embodies that coupling: he is both a witness and a thing to be witnessed. His metallic tray and lid often become the subjects of extreme focus, *tours de force* of reflection and revelation in which an elaborate architecture, otherwise absent from the picture, can be viewed.

Given that Roccasalva is constantly drawing on one aspect of his practice to inform another, the reflected architecture is perhaps best understood in relation to the lemon juicer. A foundational image in the artist's practice, the juicer has previously been seen as the imagined cupola of a cathedral in drawings, videos, and digital prints. It has been described by Roccasalva as the metonymic symbol of a potentially unachievable work: the construction, in some distant future, of the cathedral itself as a culminating artistic statement. If it is this cathedral that appears in the waiter's tray, then he, like the lemon squeezer, is the bearer only of implied—rather than tangible—presence.

By their very nature, artworks exemplify openness of meaning. The intimate embrace between artwork and viewer can never be fully consummated. Nevertheless, a neon text from Lacan that marks the entrance/exit of the exhibition suggests that object and viewer share a common genetic source: the gaze. The words "you never look at me from the place I see you" are arranged as a linguistic Möbius strip; they carry the intimation that objects, once they have been looked upon with enough intensity, possess the haunting potential to stare back at their viewers. Like the waiter and his reflective tray, the viewer of *The Strange Young Neighbours* is implicated as another of its uncanny projections, an object that painting sees.

In recent years, Pietro Roccasalva's work has been seen in major exhibitions internationally, including *Fare Mondi / Making Worlds*, 53rd International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale; *Manifesta 7*, European Biennial for Contemporary Art, Trentino - Südtirol/Alto Adige, Italy; *ITALICS. ARTE ITALIANA FRA TRADIZIONE E RIVOLUZIONE 1968-2008*, Palazzo Grassi, Venice and Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; *Scene Shifts*, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm; and *Tableaux*, MAGASIN - Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France, and Z, CCS Bard at Seventh Regiment Armory, New York. Roccasalva lives and works in Milan.

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PIETRO ROCCASALVA

born 1970, Modica, Italy
lives and works in Milan, Italy

EDUCATION

1995 Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, Milan

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

(* indicates a publication)

- 2012 *The Strange Young Neighbours*, David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2011 *Art: Concept*, Paris France
- 2010 *Unicuique Suum Fussball*, Johnen Galerie, Berlin, Germany
- 2008 *Art Statements*, Art 39 Basel, Basel, Switzerland
Z, CCS Bard at Seventh Regiment Armory, New York, NY
- 2007 *Truka*, GAMeC Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Bergamo, Italy; Galleria Civica Montevergini, Siracusa, Italy
Truka, art : concept, Paris, France
- 2006 *Il Traviatore – The Skeleton Key*, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice, Italy
My Private #4, Ex Tempio Metodista, Turin, Italy
De Morgen, Hoet Bekaert Gallery, Gent, Belgium
La Tempesta, Johnen + Schöttle, Cologne, Germany
- 2005 \emptyset , ZERO..., Milan, Italy
- 2004 *O.H.*, Viafarini, Milan, Italy
- 2003 *Fisheye*, Vistamare, Pescara, Italy

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

(* indicates a publication)

- 2012 *Rotary Connection*, organized by Loring Randolph, Casey Kaplan, New York, NY
Four Rooms, Centre for Contemporary Art - Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, Poland
- 2011 *Four Rooms*, Centre for Contemporary Art - Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, Poland
Eroi, GAM - Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Torino, Italy
Proposal (a room, some things) for Rome., curated by Vincent Honoré, MONITOR, Rome, Italy
**Tableaux*, MAGASIN - Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France

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- 2010 **Scene Shifts*, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden
SI - Sindrome Italiana, Magasin - Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France
the hybrid fuels ... suddenly this inside, Galerie der Stadt, Sindelfingen, Germany
More Pricks Than Kicks, David Roberts Art Foundation, London, England
**Il Museo Privato*, GAMeC Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Bergamo, Italy
Antidote 6, La Galerie des Galerie, Paris, France
Bagna Cauda, art : concept, Paris, France
**Ibrido. Genetica delle forme d'arte*, PAC - Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan, Italy
- 2009 *This place you see has no size at all...*, Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, France
**ITALICS. ARTE ITALIANA FRA TRADIZIONE E RIVOLUZIONE 1968-2008*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL
**Guardami. Il volto e lo sguardo nell'arte 1969-2009*, Museo Cantonale d'Arte, Lugano, Switzerland
1989-2009. Overview, Celebration, Critique, Galleria Civica, Trento, Italy
Sniper, Margret Biedermann, Munich, Germany
**Fare Mondi / Making Worlds*, 53 Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy
Reframing, CCA Andratx Kunsthalle, Mallorca, Spain
- 2008 **50 lune di Saturno / 50 Moons of Saturn*, T2 Torino Triennale, Turin, Italy
Samedi / Samedi, art : concept, Paris, France
Faces and Figures (Revisited), Marc Jancou Contemporary, New York, NY
**ITALICS. ARTE ITALIANA FRA TRADIZIONE E RIVOLUZIONE 1968-2008*, Palazzo Grazzi, Venice, Italy
**Manifesta 7*, European Biennial for Contemporary Art, Trentino - Südtirol/Alto Adige, Italy
Mediterraneo2008, Perna Foundation, Ravello, Italy
Zuordnungsprobleme, Johann König, Berlin, Germany
Selective Knowledge, MIET Cultural Center, Athens, Greece
**In Geneva No One Can Hear You Scream*, Blondeau Fine Art Services, Geneva, Switzerland
**ITALIA ITALIE ITALIEN ITALY WLOSZKA, Ritti su la cima del mondo, noi scagliamo, una volta ancora, la nostra sfida alle stelle!...* ARCOS, Benvento, Italy
Cook, Edmundson, Hyldon, Perrone, Roccasalva, art : concept, Paris, France
- 2007 *Solo24Ore*, MUSEION - Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Bolzano, Italy
Senso Unico, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, NY
**A gap in keeping silent: noise*, Poetry Summer Watou, Poëziezomer, Belgium
**Apocalittici e Integrati. Utopia nell'arte italiana di oggi*, MAXXI Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo, Rome, Italy
**Camera con vista - arte e interni in Italia dal 1900 al 2000*, Palazzo Reale, Milan, Italy
**Glocal and Outsiders: Connecting Cultures in Central Europe*, Prague Biennale 3, Prague, Czech Republic
- 2006 *partoftheprocess2*, ZERO..., Milan, Italy
**PAINTING CODES: i codici della pittura*, Galleria Comunale d'Arte Contemporanea, Monfalcone (GO), Italy
**La Città di Leonardo, L'arte Contemporanea, Milano e Leonardo*, Fondazione delle

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Stelline, Milan, Italy

- 2005 **Follow my shadow*, Premio Furla per l'Arte, Villa delle Rose, Bologna, Italy
Doppia Visione, Magazzino d'Arte Moderna, Rome, Italy
Strata. Difference and repetition, Fondazione Davide Halevim, Milan, Italy
Changes of mind: Belief and Transformation, Haunch of Venison, London, England
**Generations of Art - 10 anni alla FAR*, Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como, Italy
**XVI Quadriennale di Roma*, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, Italy
- 2004 *partoftheprocess*, ZERO..., Milan, Italy
**Paradiso e Inferno*, Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice, Italy
- 2003 **La RiproRiduzione*, Archivio di Stato, Turin, Italy
**Tracce di un seminario*, Viagarini, Milan, Italy
Opening, Beaulieu Art Gallery, Gent, Belgium
**Il Tirana Biennale*, National Gallery of Arts and National Fair Centre, Tirana, Albania
**Forse Italia*, S.M.A.K. - Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent, Belgium
**Great Expectations!*, Fuori Uso, Pescara, Italy
Uno Uno Prima, stage Europeo degli esordi, Lucca, Italy
- 2002 *In Extremis*, Advanced Course in Visual Arts (with Giulio Paolini), Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como, Italy
La RiproRiduzione, Istituto Nazionale delle Calcografia, Rome, Italy

AWARDS

- 2005 Premio Furla per l'Arte

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**Il Museo Privato - La passione per l'arte contemporanea nelle collezioni bergamasche*, curated by Giacinto Di Pietrantonio and Maria Cristina Rodeschini. Bergamo: GAMEC Editions, 2010
**Ibrido. Genetica delle forme d'arte*, curated by Giacinto di Pietrantonio and Francesco Garutti. Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2010
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**Guardami. Il volto e lo sguardo nell'arte 1969-2009*, Museo Cantonale d'Arte, Lugano, Switzerland. Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2009
**Fare Mondi / Making Worlds*, 53 Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy. Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2009
Daneri, Anna, "Skeletons in the Closet," *Mousse*, Issue 17, February-March 2009, pp. 98-99
Rabottini, Alessandro, "Pietro Roccasalva: Belief Systems," *MAP*, Number 17, Spring 2009, pp. 68-73
- 2008 **Pietro Roccasalva*, texts by Barry Schwabsky, Eduardo Gnemmi, edited by Alessandro Rabottini. Zurich: JRPIRingier, 2008
**50 lune di Saturno / 50 Moons of Saturn*, texts by D. Birnbaum, A. Lindsay, D. Gonzalez-Foerster, G. Baker, H. Fang, I. Calderoni, M. Vecellio, T2 Torino Triennale, Turin, Italy. Milan: Skira, 2008
**Manifesta 7*, Trentino - Südtirol/Alto Adige, Italy. Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2008
**In Geneva No One Can Hear You Scream*, Blondeau Fine Art Services, Geneva, Switzerland. Zurich: JRPIRingier, 2008
**ITALIA ITALIE ITALIEN ITALY WLOSZKA*, *Ritta su la cima del mondo, noi scagliamo, una volta ancora, la nostra sfida!...*, ARCOS, Benvento, Italy. Milan: Electa, 2008
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E. Vetrocq, Marcia, "The Italian Job," *Art in America*, February 2008
"Extra Art at the ADAA's Art Show," *Artforum.com*, January 11, 2008
- 2007 **Apocalittici Integrati*, text by Anna Maria Mattiolo. Milan: Electa, 2007
**Glocal and Outsiders: Connecting Cultures in Central Europe*, Prague Biennale 3, Prague, Czech Republic. Milan: Giancarlo Politi Editore, 2007
**A gap in keeping silent: noise*, Poëziezomer 07, Watou, Belgium
**Camera con vista*, Palazzo Reale, Milan. Milan: Skira, 2007
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- 2005 **Changes of Mind: Belief and Transformation*, London: Haunch of Venison, 2005
 **Follow my shadow*, Premio Furla per l'Arte, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologna, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venica. Milan: Charta, 2005, pp. 72-73
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- 2003 *Laubard, Charlotte, "Dissoi Logoi," *Forse Italia*, S.M.A.K. Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent, Belgium, pp. 54-56
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