

UN VIAGGIO CHE È ITINERARIO IN CINQUE DIVERSI PUNTI
DELLA STESSA COSA. UN VIAGGIO NELLA BOLOGNA ULTRA CONTEMPORANEA
CHE È PERCORSO, QUINDI ESPERIENZA.

QUOTIDIANITA': QUANDO LA PERFORMANCE NON TI LASCIA SENZA SCARPE

by Gudrun De Chirico

DAILY LIVING : WHEN THE PERFORMANCE DOESN'T LEAVE YOU SHOELESS

IT SEEMS THAT THE TIME OF THE PERFORMANCES that described solitude and isolation of the 20th century man has gone. Gone are those performances like hundreds of balloons blown up with helium and worn like an armour by the Finnish artist Roi Vaara, or Zhang Huang's resistance trials including being covered in fish oil and honey and standing in public toilets waiting (or hoping) for a swarm of fly to assault him, or Roddy Hunter, who repeatedly risked being choked to death by wearing a plastic bag over his face. And indeed, gone are the days of the extreme actions that made history, from Vito Acconci's "risk and suffering" trials to Chris Burden's survival-instinct trials involving crucifixion to a car's trunk, scorched by flames of burning petrol, crushed glass, being stabbed in the abdomen or shot in the arm by a gun. Gone are the days of corporeal-spiritual experiences (a la Abramovic-Ulay) of the seventies, gone are the attempts to achieve reincarnations in a new identity through a surgeon's scalpel (Orlan), and gone are the Gina Pane's performances involving no less than danger and going beyond physical limits. No more of this is left. No more religious-political exploits like the Polish artist Warpechowski or the Chinese artist Ma Liuming did in the past. We only need to take a look around to see that performances, now, focus on the routine of everyday. Or rather, we could argue that the time has come for a new ride on the carousel of the epic of the ambiguity of everyday. One performance above all seems to hint at this, the paradoxical, humour-ridden performance of the Vienna artist Erwin Wurm featuring men and women portrayed in ordinary life scenes made completely absurd by the presence of unlikely and comic visual gags like bodies crushed on the floor by a briefcase, hung on a wall by a broomstick, people sitting on stools fastened to a wall, hanging in the balance by a heeled shoe, crouching down with the head stuck in the fridge or lying in the street with legs and hips up in the air and the face in the curb. But the Austrian artist's heads saga does not end here, since there are many, many more: people leaning on a fork with their cheeks and hands, heads stuck inside coloured buckets or plastic bags, their

mouths filled by lemons, apples and bananas while the body is either on the knees or lies down, in the shape of a cross, raised above the floor by a series of oranges. A chain of "everyday jokes" in which the charm-joke nails the boring routine of everyday to the wall, clings to evanescent, temporary shapes, estranges itself from its temporary balances and counterweights enough to return us an everyday routine at the mercy of precarious balancing rules. No, it is no longer the time for revolts, alarmists, emergencies. It indeed seems to be the time for actions capable of moving our habitual perception routines little by little, breaking the automatisms of everyday routine by inserting some new clues in it. In other words, a series of little earthquakes in everyday life and rote actions carried out by means of small nudges. This means that there are several kinds of routine. There is the routine slowly pulled up using the camera as a pair of tongs which is then drained down by the visual vortex of the newest trends in contemporary documentary film-making. Or the more corpuscular, small-grain routine meticulously scanned and analysed by any form of minimalist tale. The fact that routine, or rather the dust of its most meaningless banality is one of the most used and abused subject of contemporary art is no news. However, it is necessary to explore carefully the different ways of re-using routine, because the many roads we can take can even be completely different one from each other. And so, even if the boundary can be represented by a tangent line that divides the "presence" from absence, we can see that, among ghosts, and estranged objects a recycling of the smallest charms and tricks of our routine takes place. And from this point of view, the territory of performances, for their very nature of being action and act, reality and the stage, represent a place where short-circuit holds a seat in the first row. An example of this are the performances staged in Bologna in the last months of 2007 that, in their own peculiar way, can be seen as a sort of multi-legged trip. Supervised by Xing's Silvia Fanti and Simona Brighetti, leg no.1: takes place on November 24: we are at the Raum in Via Cà Selvatica and there, in the small, confined space of a cube-like room, hidden among water bottles, overturned like

hourglasses in water buckets and ancient vacuum cleaners appears the elongated, thin outline of Dutch artist Theo Kooijman. His face seems to have come straight out of an Aki Kaurismäki movie, and is attached to a rail-thin body engulfed in orange overalls. Around him, low glass tables, timer-operated alarm clocks, duct tape, threads. Kooijman expresses his own physicality matching routine objects found in the environment with broken, discontinuous movements from a point to another, from a thing to another, moving to and from there and back again. A cardboard box full of sugar cubes is overturned on the floor but, immediately after, its content is used to rebuild, with a meticulous effort, a sort of glucose cathedral. Near to it, a large black carpet is used twice: first to wrap it up and hide inside it and then to naturally and gracefully come out of it and fold it like a tablecloth.

Kooijman sits, waits, scribbles something on the ground with a rope, counts to 11 while spinning around, then he says time is passing, unravels the thread and once again says "it is 23.15" as he looks at the clock. Then he grabs the vacuum cleaner, aiming it upwards and dragging it on the wall for a while, and then winds up the thread, stands still, waits again. All

of a sudden, an alarm clock buzzes, he takes the time, takes off his shoes and puts the timer inside it. He is still restless though, and so he starts to undress and wraps the timer in the shirt and in the trousers and then in both socks until the alarm clock's buzz can no longer be heard. He then carries on and rubs a cream on his arm, makes some dance steps as he waits for the cream to be fully absorbed and then goes away. Then he returns, fully dressed, and he says OK. Applauses pour down, and the artist returns everything to their places. That is the way to make people feel the passing of time without actually talking about the passage of time. Apparently, in this Kooijman performance, planned together with the French choreographer Martine Pisani and called Tic-Tac, Ding-Dong, spectators are in an one-to-one relationship with the everyday, routine objects but thanks to the hectic, frantic assembling of these objects and actions the performance's dynamics take on surreal features. Every move, every sketched gesture dissolves as it is swallowed by the tidal wave of the importance it is attributed to. This context could be a realistic one but no, these banal, everyday-life objects become stepping stones for a leap outside reality. This journey beyond borders becomes even more rarefied when we reach leg number two of our trip: Déjà.vu, a project supervised by Lelio Aiello. The wall cage, this time, is represented by the renowned Neon Campobase where a shadow and a play of lights are all that is left of everyday routine. A world removed from safe, everyday routine

symbols, of which only echoes on the wall are left. Faded colour spots, dented in some point by some Chinese shadows or by the minimalist performance *Uso pratico contemplativo- divagazioni corporali di un volume inondato di luce* [Practical-contemplative usage – corporeal digressions of a volume flooded by light] developed by Kinkaleri in partnership with the Academy of Fine Arts. In that performance Cristina Rizzo is a benumbed body that bleeds out its last vital pulses, and it is not even the leading character of the show. That role is entrusted to its shadow, an intangible shape, *trompe-l'oeil* and *ultrabody* that is dissolved inside the videos shot on the walls. Its absence is its [...] the contradictory nature of performances, due to their very nature of precarious identity, represents man's inability to fit in this world. With this second leg our trip took us to the fading memories of



space and time, while with leg no.3 the pendulum of performances once again swings towards "presences", and at the same time it rotates on perception alterations that are not so quite unlike the previous ones. Genetically Modified Routine which is already made evident by the very location of the event, Nosadella 2, an exhibition centre but also the residence of an artist in the very centre of Bologna, directed by Elisa Del Prete. The location acts as a true node where work jumps on the back of the living space. Eating, waking up in the morning and thinking, taken together, become parallel-mounted actions. A similar process happens when the Portuguese artist André Guedes breaks our gaze and our habits. The space-time fabric boils in our memory, which is by itself a locus of everyday routine, narrowed near people so much that more movements than actions actually enter in our head. Choreography without dance, reality that overturns its own clapperboard: here, a small group of people cooks up their world, peels tomatoes, takes up dishes and cutlery from the cupboard, repairs a light-bulb, while two of them quote some excerpts from Jonathan Franzen's "The Correction". And then again, plastic bags are folded, lights are turned on and off, people wraps up in blankets like in ancient Rome and at the same time, in the area near the living room, some piano notes can be heard. In the end, they all get dressed and go out of their house asking each other who took the keys of the house. The cinema's bounds and rebounds are fairly evident here, but it feels like the remains of the

editing process have survived and have been left for us to see, together with everything that went away from the writer's narration choices, everything that was left out of the "emergency". It is their being ghosts, their having always been ghosts that turns them into actual people and concrete gestures. A funnel for perennial estrangements that becomes even stronger when, during our tour across performances, we reach leg number four where we find a source of perception spins: the ZimerFrei collective and its aesthetic rips which for a single evening (November 23, 2007) have been encased in the (borrowed) halls of the Museo della Musica di Strada Maggiore. Suddenly we get drenched, almost drowned by the group's videos, the acid rain of an invasion of shards of the sky and quick flashes in which lights go out as the eagle-views of Athens, Brussels, Nuoro, are mixed by high-pitch sounds. And this is not the end. As a second signal is issued, the cities' squares and streets appear in a distorted, kinetically modified view in an exaggeratedly slow bubble-diaphragm together with passer-bys, buses, pigeons, tourists and amplified, distorted voices that whisper "they told us to be human beings", with a voice resembling an invisible monster. And then other voices that pronounce sentences like "nothing is working hear, we have failed, we were wrong", accompanied by the repeated, monotonous scene of duct tapes measuring the surrounding spaces en plain air, plastic gloves, people walking on all fours and some dogs appearing here and there. A small audio-psycho theatre where the three ZimmeFrei: Anna Rispoli, Anna de Manincor, Massimo Carozzi sit behind the technological console, back to the public as they, moving their feet block and resume the flow of images amplified by acoustic doping. It is not a case that right next to them stand Manuele Giannini and Stefano Pilia playing electric guitars that add powerful, "live" metal chirps to further exalt the atmosphere in the room, building up a surplus of sounds that indeed originates from "routine" devices and movements but then is inflated, crumbles away and collapses into a mystery that goes far beyond the dimension of everyday. Say goodbye to ordinary space and time, to the usual reference points: the sky has been flipped upside down, the earth seems like a charcoal wasteland and everything is divided in parallel territories, as if parthenogenesis had occurred. The pictures that introduce the event seem to point out the same thing. Next to each picture stands a headset to listen to the audio files and the pictures themselves are encased in a lens mounted on the table, a layout that makes it almost possible to actually feel the three dimensions. In other words, photographs seems alive and moving, as if it was capable of showing its own cinematographic potential even by standing still. The same applies to the pictures of men holding a drill or gagged by adhesive tape, or for the spiral stairwell which a woman in red is climbing up. A man clad in a ski-

mask waits for her at the bottom end, but the distance between them is measure over-realistically by the noise of doors being violently shut or creaking on their hinges and most of all by the noise of feet clad in shoes. The shoes, another routine, everyday object, lead us to the fifth and last leg in this journey of performances about "routine". This time the performance is the very way in which an exhibit is visited. The performance has been devised by English artist Adam Chodzko and located in the halls and corridors of the new MAMbo directed by Gianfranco Maraniello. The exhibit will last from December 1 to February 3, 2008, and features a bookcase filled with several pairs of used shoes that the exhibit visitors can wear during their visit in the museum halls. A basic trick, with collective appeal and exchange for all that arrive. All it took was organizing a collection of old, used shoes from which everyone can choose what they like before starting the journey in Chodzko's works. The opportunity for a second-hand exchange, the opportunity of choosing a new "footprint" to watch an exhibition. Indeed, as the greatest Hollywood actors tell, building a new character starts exactly from that: choosing a new pair of shoes. Routine outside of routine's orbit, negotiated or inverted in a simple combinations game that further enlarges the world's mathematics. Reuse and recycle, even outside the boundaries of arts performances as shoes are distributed to people in need as an act of charity. The primal nature of a gentle, charitable barter for which the exhibit-path represents the steps of a small community, the baseframe of Chodzko's favourite springboard. The action of searching, meeting and creation of visions in the fabric of everyday reality by means of photography, installations and videos that unravel the minutes and seconds of today and weave them again in a thread that puts real people and their imagination together. Once again the living environment hangs between fantasy and reality, fiction and journalistic "truth", where economic ads or wall signs "tear up" their very medium of expression with the unfocused imperativeness of their statements. "Artist seeks people who believe they look like God"; "Were you a troubled child?"; "How would you light up Heaven?". Stimuli, and not just intellectual and sensory ones, that take off from the synchronism of world communication and that here are decanted and poured in the multiple-layered oasis of a space in which new life is breathed in. The "mediated" life of an artist that utters a cry to summon the "exiled of everyday" of a world that temporarily walks in someone else's shoes. And maybe it is that very sideways walk between our world and someone else's world that the physical dialogue of performances we have seen so far shows off its polished, sharp teeth, which will not be used for prêt-à-porter smiles but rather to bite ferociously the most banal postmark of our time.