

# Place your bets!

By Jeanette Zwingenberger

Flavia Bigi explores several media (drawing, engraving, painting, photography, video, sculpture and installation). Her work resembles to a diary where she confesses her reflections about life and humanity. By translating her thoughts into images with a sort of voice-over, she creates a direct communication with the spectator, taking him as a witness. She bets on the enchantment of imagination that belongs to childhood and wisdom. Her honesty is her strength. One of her preferred subjects, an acrobat dancing on a straight rope, turns out to be the metaphor of the artist herself and of how she balances the game in the social, political and economical area. This universe, at first sight playful, opens up to a philosophical dimension, where the artist gives the way to rewind life differently.

The artwork is shaped through essential forms. Cubes and circles represent a light, graphic and musical approach. The artist's background - classical studies and her deep interest in mathematics - explains a language close to space equations. Proportions define a space, fix matches between numbers. Letters associate the human being to the world. How Humanity embodies the space and negotiates its rules and freedom with others?

## Dice throw

The spectator discovers six dice of Carrara marble lying on the floor. They describe models of different kind of relationships. *You* and *I*, are a couple of dice on which each face is translated in six languages. According to Martin Buber, *Ich und Du*, atoms of language, propose links into the inter-human sphere. Multilingualism refers to different countries and cultures the artist deals with during her life. This a main question in our times of globalisation: diversity and individual cultural singularity.

Another match of dice, entitled: « *I claim to myself* » symbolize, one the social frame, and the other the personal sphere of action. On the six faces of a dice are engraved in Justinian font: *Lex, Familia, Cultura, Religio, Natura, Sors*. The other dice is covered by hand engraved graffiti: *Conscientia, Armonia, Possibilitas, Fides, Territorium*. The word *Libertas* stays invisible. It depends on all of us to imagine it.

The installation is a mental scheme through which the artist expresses her perception of each individual in a societal field. Each throw of dice creates a combination,

which leads to a settlement of different territories and possibilities of relationship.

Law/ Consciousness

Family / Harmony

Culture/ Possibility

Religion/ Faith

Nature/ Territory

Fate/ (*Freedom*)

The last couple of dice sounds like a love letter. On one face, this sentence is written: "*My fears are my wings*"; "*would you fly with me?*" is the answer on the other dice. They engender an intimate dialogue between lovers. Flavia Bigi invites to an interactive game on three levels: the intimate sphere, the relation between Me and the You, the symbolic dimension. Her emblematic language is essential, for it questions the universality of any single life. At a second sight, the viewer realizes that the dice have «rounded corners». These used and polished corners evoke the idea of rotation peculiar to the dice throw, and place them in physical reality. Like embodied objects, they come to life and invite bystanders 'own mental projections.

The installation ***Pay Attention 2008*** shows seven black boxes with cut-offs of seven religious symbols: the Star of David, the Christian Cross, the Buddha Dharma, the Islamic Crescent, the Taoist Yin and Yang, The Sikh Khanda, the Hindu Aum. Suspended from the ceiling, they hang in a circle, promoting an interreligious dialogue while the viewer stays in the middle. The artist thinks that any individual should have the freedom to choose his own belief. Flavia Bigi gives a human dimension to her visual lexicon made of circles and squares, building up a psychological scenography.

The installation ***Freedom/Tension 2009*** is a box with mirror surfaces. It is a form of criticism of stiff and secluded minds: its squared shape symbolizes passive-aggressive behaviours as well as difficulty to communicate. Nevertheless the red elastic wires, which keep the box suspended and run across the exhibition area, act like lines of sight.

The installation recalls tension and power games between individuals and social political environment.

At another level, the squared shape reminds the architecture of power and its hermetical impact on others in contrast with the system of elastic network, which is a synonym of sharing. The mirror makes us reflect about our own positioning. This work deals with **essentials** questions of our century and namely the humankind and its individuality trapped in the mass-system of a sealed society, which is called into doubt

only by art.

### ***Human puzzle 2010***

Flavia Bigi's drawings suggest first a pavement of stones. Then, bubbles or heads start to appear: a game of glass pearls, like a system where all elements are responding to each other, creates an echoing space for the viewer. It's a puzzle of our society concerning the individual place in the world. Pieces fit with each other, similar to a life sequence, which becomes perceivable along a logic thread.

In the drawing ***Come Closer***, several circles lay on the intersection of two geometric planes; some of them, painted in blood red, evoke an organic space. The rounds remind not yet identified cells, without sex, an open mouth, a hole. The human being is reduced to a head with no hands, legs or chest. For the artist, it is a mental and biological space, representing people with their stories and their legacy in a territory of struggle. In a simplified style, we can perceive three emotional languages: neutral, happy and sad. They are a crowd, a multitude of beings, which communicate or not between each other. They recall at the same time a multitude of people and an imprisoned isolation, like soap bubbles: *Vanitas*.

In the drawing ***La Mélodie des Choses 2011***, another circle is outlined by people whose bodies are pierced by a chain where we can read a sentence by Rilke « *...What I'll consider, is to let play all the melody as children can hear it. Silent voice, it has to float on the scene, and to an invisible signal the children small voices attack and strike out, whereas the vast river keeps on rumbling across the tight room and its night, from infinity to infinity* ».

It symbolizes the enchainment of beings generated by language.

The circle, but also the oval, can be also perceived in the transparent glass heads with drawings engraved by hand. In ***Carousel 2013***, the transparency of the faces suspended as a mobile reflects the interaction between the exterior and interior space. The glass refers to human fragility. Drawings like filigreed embroideries illustrate the mental space through a collage of images found in newspapers, combined with intimate thoughts and echoes from the world. The omnipresent spider web suggests the ramification of our thoughts and circumstances.

In the video entitled ***One minute of silence, please 2013***, flying chairs run through the screen, following the carousel mechanical rotation. A bright halo forms another circle, engendering a Dantesque

atmosphere during this summer night. The music by the Italian composer Francesco Giammusso amplifies this feeling of a dazing spin, until it stops.... and a minute of silence ends the video. The playful language of Flavia Bigi finally sounds grave. The suspended characters are in the middle of nowhere: here the game is a hand-to-hand fight with destiny, as Anatole France would have said.

**Artist's view.** Flavia Bigi illustrates through a set of photographs her own life of a woman, a mother, an artist. Her vision full of poetry is exaltation, a wish of a life rich of happiness that she shares with us. Robert Filliou: "art is what makes life more interesting than art."

The artist took the photographs *Hanging clothes 2009* at the times she was expecting her first and then her second child. The laundry of the expected children hangs on a line outside, in the family house garden. Another child plays in this sunny and verdant garden. She belongs to this joyful landscape and she shares a ritual, linking together past and future generations.

A wall, the kitchen, the house, people coming and going, daily occupations, they are all impregnated with a blend of colours, giving life to another dimension: a pictorial discovery of magic moments that the artist captures with her camera. A painting *Untitled 2005* immortalizes another instant of gaiety, of two kids floating in a rubber colourful lifesaver.

The video *The chain 2013* and a set of photographs *Ada 2013* show kids of different ages at the beach. A little girl of four years pulls with difficulty a heavy boat chain. A boy of six years imagines that the same chain is a magical object. While the other boy of ten years walks bending his back, drawing the chain, which has lost its mystery. These different periods of life symbolize the relation with the world and the objects. The chain represents the enchainment of children of different ages: the loss of oneself and of imagination. How do we interfere with the surrounding world? Through these images representing children of different ages, the artist makes us discover our own commitment to poetic daydreams.

The real challenge that art has to meet is to enlighten the existential questioning. Art has the capacity to link individual mythology to historical, mythical and cosmic contexts, explored through collective and personal experiences, which can be both conscious and unconscious.

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