

FEDERICO BIANCHI CONTEMPORARY ART, MILAN

Press release

Jacopo Prina – Mood Maps

Text by **Elisabetta Longari**

Opening: Saturday, 23rd January, 2016, from 5.00pm to 8.00pm.

23rd January, 2016 – 25th March, 2016

Federico Bianchi Contemporary Art presents Jacopo Prina's 4th solo show, opening on Saturday, January 23rd from 5pm to 8pm in via Imbonati 12, Milan.

In the Mirror of Jacopo Prina by Elisabetta Longari

A new archive-like flavour is introduced through the systematic sampling of a series of material finds, organized according to "mixed" criteria, involving order and disorder, to satisfy both the rational and the imaginary, which coexist inside each of us. Perhaps it would be better to talk about the arrangement of an atlas, a richer and more varied representation than the recent maps series. Just like the maps, these new works try "to answer the question: Where are we?" as the artist himself succinctly pointed out in 2005, in a written piece published in the catalogue of his first solo show in Milan, at the Luciano Inga Pin Gallery.

Compared to the past, more space and prominence has been given to the playful features which run through the works of Esprit Dada, Neo Dada and those leaning towards Pop.

Among the pieces applied to the canvases, orbiting them like planets, we find various items: fabrics and trimmings reminiscent of Baj, geometrically shaped monochrome cardboard masks, similar to those used by Hans Richter in his first experimental animated movies, but also Indian-like earrings and eye-catching buttons, of dubious if not bad taste. Art history does not shy away from kitsch, which Prina confronts, recognising in it an important part of our culture.

In the place of coloured pencils, he uses fabric swatches displaying hues and textures of unimaginable variety and depth.

The artist lives day-to-day reality as a source of magnificent materials, using them to give the artworks the not-insignificant appearance of treasure from "Arabian Nights"; although these compositions aim at abstraction despite the presence of recognisable objects, they have nevertheless an almost metaphysical aftertaste.

The cuts and grafts of these collages cannot but recall the distribution of spaces in De Chirico's windows, while common objects resembling small monuments are reminders of Gnoli's enormous and silent buttons.

In addition to using canvas and insertions, Prina also works on reproductions, implying a discourse on simulacrum more than on the multiplication of images.

Some of his works are solely photographic, and consist of colour prints of transitional configurations which, being the product of a collage, exist almost exclusively in the moment of the shot.

Whether it is painting with applied items on canvas or photography, the matrix of the images is the same, as is the way of integrating the constituent elements; what changes profoundly is the substance of the body of the works.

Items and fabrics, inserted into a dialogue with acrylic paint, have a tactile depth, their own tangible and natural three-dimensional quality, while the small theatres of organized, photographed and printed heterogeneous elements have different features: first of all the impressive yield of weaves, fringes, reliefs, shadows and even transparencies allow the thickness and three-dimensional quality of items to be felt in a colder and more intellectual way. Photography and print so refined as to preserve the artisan characteristic of the paper and fabric cuts, to enable this technique, certainly faster than painting, to communicate the artist's remarkable feel for bricolage. There's no doubt: he loves handling these everyday yet enchanted materials.

A button becomes an eye; a round piece of fabric is a face. Many characters emerge from these situations, staged for amusement and for the sake of bold combinations. A pencil, similar to a thin lanky man, and the King of Diamonds, conventional and distinguished, his status conferring height, meet with numbers and wallpaper with huge flowers. The world is the same impossible and amazing mish-mash Lewis Carroll's Alice had to unravel, while having lots of fun.

The textures of the collage fabrics communicates with the paint, working most of the time as a background, so that patterns can be found at the edges, thus becoming the canvas itself, stretched on the framework: the abstract grains of the fabrics meet and collide with the comb-like shapes outlined by the brush. The *assemblages* of fabric remnants of different purpose, origin, texture and colour are a convincing metaphor of how the world works: they are fragments of our lives; they talk about us, of the furnishings of our homes, and our apparel, of the clothes and environments we surround ourselves with.

The painted shapes introduce numerous cultural echoes while some remind us of Klee and Kandinskij's light creatures, others make us think of the "evolving hieroglyphics" on Hans Richter's rolls (especially "Prelude"), restoring the sense of movement in time and of time.

Even circular shapes, apparently more static, actually resemble cells migrating from left to right, following western culture text direction. These shapes, which when whole are the most complete figures par excellence, circles and disks, are effortlessly disrupted and split in Prina's work: on the edges, both on the left and on the right, many of them hint at their ideal completion beyond the sides, therefore presenting themselves as partial visions of something elusive in its entirety. The resulting effect underlines pace, passing, transformation and transition. In a nutshell, the transient nature of time, changing the substance of all things.

This bond with life, intrinsic in the remains and evidence of reality which make up the individual works, is even more visible in the flight of the works on the wall, in the way they are displayed using the wall's surface as if it were the support of a single installation, following the same compositional logic of the smaller "fragments" and taking part in the same fascinating syntax of aggregation and separation of the elements. And we, with our gestures and colours, soon become aware of being an integral part of a work always in progress.

Jacopo Prina was born in Milan (Italy) on 20th December, 1971. He lives and works in Milan. He has taken part in various solo and collective exhibitions in Italy and abroad. In 2008 he exhibited a large installation at the Fondazione Pomodoro. Paintings, photography and installations are his favourite means of expression.