

An Introduction, in Spite of Everything
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"Intermedium," the title chosen for the Giulia Piscitelli exhibition at the Madre, is a Latin word that means "being in the middle," between the limits of space and time, and signifies a creative process that is not yet complete, hence, still open to further possibilities.

By bringing together works produced from the early 1990s to the present-day, many of which unpublished, from bleached cloth paintings to photography, from site-specific installations to video documents, the exhibition and this catalogue (which enriches the exhibition with a record of earlier works related to the ones on display), highlight the different sides to this artist's exploration, with special focus on her reconnaissance of the social, economic and cultural geography of a city like Naples. However, this is neither a retrospective nor a catalogue; rather, it is a comprehensive vision of a thinking process that is not made up of individual moments, but of a *continuum* of ideas and objects, which, in turn, are put forward once more and reused, summoned back into play, so that they take on a new potential meaning. The exclusion of some works from the exhibition and their inclusion in this book are the result of an ongoing process of correction, revision, progressive verification and, among other things, they are always liable to be further corrected, revised and verified.

It should thus come as no surprise that some of the works made in previous years and never exhibited before are being shown here at the Madre for the first time, years after their conception and/or production. One such example is *S.A.M.*, a video mounted on the occasion of this exhibition that includes images filmed in the 1990s as part of the *Studio Aperto Multimediale*, an independent laboratory-space founded by Piscitelli along with Lorenzo Scotto di Luzio and Pasquale Cassandro in 1992. The photographs and the video of the project entitled *La Mela* are also being presented for the first time in unabridged form, and are published here for the first time as well: archive images in which the artist reveals the duality of an Italian emigrant to the United States, who combines his work as a restaurateur with an irrepressible and unclassifiable creative urge, truly an anthem to freedom of expression.

This and other works allude to a path of self-knowledge that on every occasion involves various elements, like everyday work, the body, sexual identity, social class, memory, physical and mental illness, death, all of which are in some way related to the need for pacification with the discordant forces that inhabit the Ego and are all designed to create a sort of suspension between reality and possibility, critique and narrative, past and present, between what we were and what we might become. This is the concept that is also expressed in the artist's most recent works, such as the two series of *Rischi minori*, work uniforms soaked in latex until they stiffen, the eternal relics of contemporary work, and *Rendiresto*, the multicolored marble crystallization of the multiple variety of exchanges and social negotiations. And then there's *Tre carte*, a project that consists of a lithographic stone-matrix for printing playing cards, three wall hangings made by discoloring their fabric with bleach, which reproduce the three playing cards, and a video which shows the artist's hands "playing three-card monte," respectively; or *Tree*, in which the viewer is as if suspended "in between" two tapestries depicting sections of a tree trunk. Lastly, *Contested Zones* is an installation consisting of streamers glued to the wall that recreate an architectural barrier at Nisida Porto Paone, the juvenile detention center of the same name. Whereas outside the museum the barrier that divides the prison from the seashore is a symbol of division, of social and territorial *intermedium*, here it becomes a flimsy threshold that is easily passed, broken up, the colorful invitation to a journey beyond things as we know them.

In all these projects, which range freely from one medium to another, with no apparent continuity, Piscitelli evokes a semblance of cacophonous normality inside the museum (like the room where two armchairs and some photographs seem to recreate the drives hidden by an intimate and domestic sphere), investigating the experience of a paradoxical vitality of living and creating "in spite of everything." What emerges from this is resistance and struggle, that is human even more than aesthetic and political. Between realism and the surreal, by articulating issues such as the relationship between life and death, the interweaving and reciprocal definition of opposite states of mind, such as joy and desperation, or between contrasting drives, such as seriousness and indifference, loyalty and fraud, or between opposing conditions, such as freedom and confinement, Piscitelli explores the mechanisms of exploitation and social inclusion/exclusion, gender dynamics, the languages of folklore and pop-

ular communication, little by little revealing how in the reading of a page in a book (this one perhaps?) the actual meaning of creating art in a human and social condition seems to be able to do without art...yet cannot. And not even a museum, for example the Madre, can do without it. We are reminded of this, actually told that this is so, by the two works that open and close the exhibition.

1. The documentation room from the S.A.M. experience, with which the exhibition ends, with no works, but also, we might say, with no "ifs ands or buts," is a tacit as well as direct and irrepressible invitation from Piscitelli to the Madre. Covered with the leaflets from the activities carried out in that non-profit space that was founded specifically because there was no museum, whereas there should have been one, because there were no other occasions for confrontation and proposal, whereas there should have been, this room puts the museum with its back against the wall, it forces it to acknowledge its responsibilities: to listen, to be available, to involve, to get its hands dirty, to go into the studios, houses, spaces where art is made and discussed. As compared to the experiments that the artists were thinking about when they founded S.A.M., for instance, between the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the Galleria Inesistente or the Gruppi Azione Sociale (evoked by the presence in the video that records the meetings at S.A.M. of a protagonist, now a witness, like Vincent D'Arista), the room dedicated to S.A.M. reveals a substantial difference, and perhaps an inevitable transcendence: from poetics to the strategy of protest, dissent, rejection, being on the outside (after all, those were also the years of the *institutional critique*), S.A.M. has now accepted coming to terms with the museum, going inside, although without adapting to the museum, forcing it to negotiate its role once more, to allow itself to be influenced, to create that "intermediate" plan between the alternative and the institutionalism that Piscitelli's whole exhibition seems to transmit to the Madre.

2. The *Lighthouse Project*, mounted in the entrance spaces of Re-PUBBLICA MADRE, on the museum's ground floor, generally used for public events: a project consisting of a lighthouse for the Madre museum's inner courtyard that has not yet been realized, but that remains a shared promise between the artist and the institution (and their community). Each museum must make and share promises, it must be able to look beyond the spatio-temporal limits of an exhibition, it must im-

agine itself, the way Piscitelli has, as something that is radically different, for example, in this case a berth, where one may load up and unload, and from which to sail once more. A museum the way the Madre was perhaps imagined to be, when it hadn't been founded yet, by the artists who frequented and breathed life into S.A.M., an institutional space-time that is not just physical but narrative too, and therefore a good omen, a pact, a commitment and a promise. Like this hypothesis, a lighthouse built at the center of the museum, which allows us to imagine it (and indeed a museum must constantly be imagined) like a light that tears through the night-time sky, that arises from the foundations and from the inside of the museum to indicate its presence to the community in which it is immersed, communicating the possible presence of another sea and of another possible mooring, but in the middle of the city of Naples, projected into (toward) its future, that of the promises exchanged between artists and the museum.

I wish to and must thank Giulia Piscitelli, for all this, for having, along with us, looked back, so as to recover a sense of responsibility, and forward, so that we could together take the risks involved in this adventure. And I also wish to thank all those who accompanied us and helped us to make this naturally "intermediate" exhibition and its catalogue come true: Giangi Fonti and the staff at the Galleria Fonti; the architect Nunzia Scorpiniti for her support of the artist in mounting the works; Pádraig Timoney and Eugenio Viola, for their texts; Maddalena Pignatiello, for having designed this book day in and day out along with the artist, and Mondadori Electa, for the care it took in its realization; Giovanni Giuliani and the AGI Verona collection, as well as the other lenders, for their generosity and passion. And, lastly, Stefano Chiodi, Gigiotto Del Vecchio and Salvatore Lacagnina, who were the first to allow me to know the art of Giulia Piscitelli "in spite of it all"...which I, in turn, share with you today through this catalogue you are about to read.