

PRESSBOOK

Giuseppe GABELLONE

frieze

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ITALY

REVIEWS



GIUSEPPE GABELLONE GAMeC, Bergamo

Sculpture is a good starting point to examine ideas around reproduction, not only because it's often editioned but also because, for millennia, certain sculptural forms have been perpetuated through replicas. Even in our digital world, the snow-white profile of a classical statue is an image capable of time-travelling without losing its power. Since he first started exhibiting in the mid-1990s, Giuseppe Gabellone has defined himself as a sculptor, even when exhibiting only photographs – usually of his sculptures – which he dismantles after the shoot. The artist has consistently, almost stubbornly, explored the relationship between sculpture and transience. He has experimented with all sorts of materials, from tobacco to glass; for the series 'I Giapponesi' (The Japanese, 2003), for example, he translated fragments of Japanese *ukyo-e* woodblock prints into reliefs made of polyurethane foam. When reproduced as copies of lost originals, Gabellone's sculptures revert to an almost immaterial state, made to inhabit the viewer's imagination and memory instead of the exhibition spaces. I've always found this deferral of tactile pleasure slightly sadistic, or possibly just defensive; an effective way to control and dictate the public's accessibility to his works.

In Gabellone's exhibition at GAMeC – which was curated by Alessandro Rabottini – any safe distance was abolished. All of the works were made specifically for the show. Viewers were greeted by *Grande Viola* (Big Purple, 2012), a soft purple quilt, in cotton velvet and acrylic padding, sewn by the artist's mother, which covered a large section of the floor. Visitors had to walk across it to get into the gallery: imprinting it with their footprints, they also risked tripping, thus messing with the elegance of the drapery (another echo of classical sculpture). At the far side of the gallery, another quilt, *Verde acido* (Acid Green, 2012), guided viewers to a smaller side room, where it crawled up the wall into a knotted tip. On the opposite wall, Gabellone had installed a pair of small reliefs in bronze and aluminium (both *Untitled*, 2013), made from lost wax casting; their wavy surfaces

mirrored the folded blanket. In the main room were three large high-relief casts in industrial epoxy resin, pigmented in flashy colours: yellow for *Proteggi Giuseppe* (Protect Giuseppe), black for *Mr. Mother*, and brick red for *Irò Irò Irò* (all 2012). The titles spell out the text inscribed in each work; the letters unfold over the surface in meandering ribbons, overlapping each other like the flourishes of an oblique, idiosyncratic calligraphy. These casts are, again, reproductions – the originals, formed in grey clay and presented as black and white photos in the catalogue, never left Gabellone's Paris studio. The epoxy resin's fine texture was both matte and shiny under the gallery's bright neon lights; it's hard to capture the radiance of the resin, expanding as a glowing halo, with a camera. The exhibition combined works in complementary colours: yellow and purple, red and green, while the black *Mr. Mother* stood alone.

I suspect that autobiography, which Gabellone usually keeps at bay, was partially responsible for the unusual warmth, playfulness and immediate proximity of these elegant works. Not only was the exhibition a sort of homecoming (it was his first in an Italian public museum since he moved to France a decade ago), but it's tempting to read the influence of family life in the titles. If *Proteggi Giuseppe* is obviously a self-portrait, *Mr. Mother* could be a reference to his wife or parenthood more generally, while the childlike iteration of *Irò Irò Irò* evokes the presence of his young son Romeo. It's obviously too intimate a world to share with pictures.

BARBARA CASAVECCHIA

1
 Sophie Calle
Etoile Dancer at the Opéra de Paris,
 detail from
Take Care of Yourself,
 2007

2 & 3
 Julia Montilla, archival stills
 from *La construcción de
 una aparición* (The Construction
 of an Apparition), 2012–13

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 Giuseppe Gabellone
 installation view,
 2013