

SIAMO FOLLI, SIAMO FONTI

WE ARE FOU, WE ARE FOUNTAINS

Angela Vettese

To connect distant or incongruous points together. This, it seems to me, is what Letizia Calori and Violette Maillard do most of all, an artistic duo that has been working for about ten years in free harmony, sometimes apart, sometimes coming together in mutual reinforcement.

I met them in Venice when they were Visual Arts students at Luav. Then they spent training periods at Staedelschule in Frankfurt, at Columbia University and at ISCP in New York, at Antonio Ratti Foundation in Como, at Botin Center in Santander, and wherever the curiosity, the sense of quality, and the desire to improve themselves, led them. I found them again in Basel helping Rirkrit Tiravanija, with whom they worked closely, performing for the public with ice cream and other food in front of the Fair venue.

I perceived them to be open to teachers and colleagues but also capable of great autonomous work. Thanks to this autonomy they have, for example, reproduced Stravinsky's ballet *The Firebird*, reimagining it as a dance of cranes towers in Frankfurt's financial center, marking a connection between today capitalism, the problems of the city and those of the years in which the play was born, between the war on the one hand and the optimistic explosion of imagination on the other. They link two moments in history: the spirit of the historical avant-garde of the early 20th century with that of our own years, and they untie what seems to be united by necessity.

This usually happens in the work of Calori & Maillard. The famous *Traccia* coffee table designed by Meret Oppenheim, with two chicken feet, in the hands of the duo becomes a pink object, a flamingo sleeping on one leg, associating pigmented bronze with a shiny oval surface, which becomes not only the body of the bird but also the surface of the table. Here, too, there is a closeness to a master artist of past times and the distance that takes us elsewhere, into the present, into the dream of a bird from great flights or into the pink of a sunset over the lagoon.

The eye that Man Ray affixed to a metronome in the work *Indestructible Object*, to describe the precision of the gaze, a loving obsession with the owner of the photographed eye, Lee Miller, and again the ticking of time passing on the notes of an instrument but, in truth, on every instrument of life, even non-musical ones, this eye, in the hand of the duo, has been depersonalized and has become an embroidery over the lining of the *Mantilla* sofa designed by Kazuhide Takahama.

Again, the work of an artist active in the early 20th century seduces and propels the two artists, who do not hesitate to embody and transport it to other textile surfaces as well. A pair of total asymmetrical glasses, one lens round and the other in the shape of a double circle, they turn out to be a reference of the front building designed by Carlo Scarpa: architecture meets with the glasses design, finding the poetry and magic of an object that can hardly perform a function. The installation of these and other objects takes place into a space that is inspired by another environment, the home of a collector and the spaces of the design pioneer Dino Gavina.

There is no territory that can be fenced off: art with art, design with design, architecture with architecture, fashion, music, poetry each in a separate house and on their own. It is true, on the other hand, that it's possible to connect all these creative fields, that it's possible to pour them into one another with the greatest freedom, bringing them to the highest degree of the sense of knowledge transmission: one thing transfers into the other as knowledge transfers from one person to another, unpredictably becoming something different and new. The modernist taste of the artist duo should not be considered as binding: it is true that their source of inspiration usually comes from the early twentieth century, but looking into further works, the way in which they have juxtaposed clothes with skyscrapers, celestial constellations with technical objects, a fireplace with the shape of a star, and so on with photographic and video interventions, it is clear that any source can be the start of their fantastic rethinking. This process is also related to the present, modeled on the current sensibility and not only the one of the source. The duo retrieve forms from the past as archetypes always ready to rise new interpretation and unexpected reenactment.

Now it explains the title of the exhibition: *We are fou*, we are fool, where fool is written in French. But it is not a hymn to the poet's solipsistic madness; rather, it is a feeling of full awareness of those who invent forms: they don't invent, actually, but they recreate. By reading the sentence from which that title comes, we realize that it continues and it is just interrupted by the typography: "We are fountains". We are fountains where water flows, perhaps always the same but with different swirls, we are sources that have sources themselves, in a continuous game of re-reading, in a flowing interpretation that misrepresents and therefore recreates, recognizing the fathers behind and being autonomous daughters without owing them philological respect. No faithful repetition, no predictable connection would know how to capture the sense of now, which can become a source itself. So welcome the most unlikely conjunctions and the most joyful betrayals, in a constant renewal of relationships between things, people, generations and thoughts.