

## *Suspension Points*

By Laura Hakel

At first glance, the main room of the Galleria Continua looks empty. The gallery is an old cinema hall with the seats removed, in the Tuscan village of San Gimignano. At the back, the curtain on the stage is open a crack to one side, and from either further back comes the quiet tune of a music box. Jorge Macchi booked this enormous hall to position the accident that is to be found a few more steps forward, in the installation *La noche de los museos* (*The Night of the Museums*).

The piece marks a contradiction between the past and the present of an action: the dropping onto the carpet of some of the spotlights dotted around the ceiling, the ambiguous evanescence of the pattern that the lights appear to spill onto it—which could be the memory of the spotlights, their light pouring out like water—and the presence of the visitor entering the hall. With a great economy of resources, Macchi constructs an unexpected situation where what we see, instead of fading away like breath on a window, generates a contradiction between a disappearance and an expansion that we anticipate but which never quite happens. The image persists, the accidental and immediate are perpetuated, transforming the hall into a space of points suspended in time.

The suspension points are deceiving signs. Not only do they constitute a rhythmic mark in the flow of what we read, but they also imply an expressive pause, an omission; they suggest something that is not there and which we must infer. They are an active, almost microscopic question in the text, a blind spot or a phantasmal ellipsis dragged along by the narrative cadence pushing us a few steps further into the fiction. Ernest Hemingway suggest something similar in his “iceberg theory”, a writing style that leaves out an essential part of an account of an event, leaving the reader to fill in the gaps with their own deductions and feelings. Such absences, deviations and modulations are part of the material with which Jorge Macchi creates his works, but these works operate on the framework

of reality. The artist constructs visual metaphors with a great conceptual potency, using elements from everyday life: clocks, fans and record players, with which he suggests contradictory, paradoxical situations that appeal emotionally and with a surreal spirit to what we see and what we know about the things.

Macchi's individual exhibition in the Galleria Continua brings together a number of medium- and large-scale installations, including two works in collaboration with Edgardo Rudnitzky, as well as videos, objects and paintings produced in the last two years. As frequently occurs in his work, these are interwoven with references to literature, cinema, music and the history of art, along with accidental, dreamlike elements, and tragedy and humour.

The works do not conceal the artifice. The image that spills out onto the rug in *La noche de los museos* is knitted with coloured threads. In other cases it is a bait, as in *Trap*, the installation located behind the curtain on the stage; a grand piano is also a box trap where we could end up ensnared. In a small room, following the way round, *Portal* is like any common zip, but it is also an inter-dimensional portal, standing upright like the door to an invisible tent. In this context, the works remind us of the "reader's pact" in literature, or the suspension of disbelief in film, theatre or music: that moment when we surrender before the fictional plot of a work and cross over into a new reality, or get trapped in it.

However, in Macchi's works the objects continue to be what they are, and if they cause short circuits in the cognitive and visual structures with which we organize the world, such as time and space, this is all the greater because the spectator cannot take refuge in having been tricked by an illusion: the fiction is evident and practically tangible in the works. There is no fantasy or complicated magic tricks to reveal, and this is the variable with which reality is destabilized even more.

*Suspension Points* takes its name from a diptych in which Macchi brings together all the points that make up an image and reorders them on the edges of the paper, as if they were dust particles dispersed with a puff of air. But the suspension points are also the perforations on a card from a music box

(*Himno/Hymn*), a number of black vinyl records that start to spin in the spectator's presence (*Waking Hours*), and the stopped flutter of the second hand on a digital clock (2018). *Presents* is an installation made from metal skeletons representing the folds of the papers that supposedly wrapped boxes or objects at the moment when they were opened: they are structures present in the memory of a past time. The works are peopled with ideas about the fragility of the visible, the architecture with which memories are constructed and the atoms that make up the images, whether physical or mental. The artist shakes up those atoms and structures, empties them and subjects them to accidents, producing anomalies that appear to show us that when the world is perceived as an image its vulnerability leaps into view: together, everything is held in place, but if one tugs on a thread the whole tapestry might come unravelled.

The same logic with which Macchi operates with his objects and installations appears in his paintings. *Temporary relief* is an oil painting where the image presents a broken display case, patched up with sticky tape. The display case is a near invisible device, whose objective is to give a context, direct the gaze towards something else—perhaps a metaphor for painting—which in this case resists falling apart in its state of utter precariousness. The work brings to light an image in crisis in visual terms and turns it on the history of painting and representation, constructing an almost “realist” image that wanders pictorially between the figurative and the abstract.

The writer Ricardo Piglia says the novel searches for its themes in reality but finds a way of reading in dreams. He also describes a type of *visionary* reader, who reads in order to know how to live. This would appear to be the way in which Jorge Macchi observes everyday objects. His works are visual artefacts that investigate how we look, how our eyes think, and amplify the action of the mystery through which the images mould what we know about the world. Macchi affects them with an almost dreamlike register, turning them into a kind of disorienting trap. Thus he constructs a poetics of suspension, of that which persists against the grain of time or outside the field of action.

If reality is at one extreme and dreams at the other, images are in the middle: a mould that gives shape to the former and is liberated in the latter. In this register of what is strange, surprising and dreamlike that Macchi accentuates with his detours and strategies, modulations and changes in pace in what we see, there emerges a way of narrating our relationship with memory and with others: a porous relationship fixed in images of the things that surround us, sustained by an emotional memory that turns objects into much more than what they seem. Jorge Macchi shows how images make us, and the potency and the fragility of this condition.