

## PIETRO ROCCASALVA

WHO SHOT MR. BURNS?

October 21 - December 16, 2016

Opening October 21, 2016

6:00-8:00 PM

Performances: 6:15, 7:15 and 8:00 PM

The Power Station is pleased to present *Who Shot Mr. Burns?*, an exhibition by Italian artist Pietro Roccasalva (b. 1970 Modica, Italy).

For the exhibition, Roccasalva presents a site-specific installation and a one-night performance. The work on view includes a new series of paintings, monochromes based on works by the Italian Futurists, three paintings from the ongoing series *Il Traviatore* and a sculpture.

In 1908 the Italian poet F.T. Marinetti wrote the futurist manifesto encompassing a focused view toward the fire of the sun and a rejection of the past. Fearlessly speeding toward the eternal absolute, the futurists believed that time and space died yesterday, therefore the past does not exist. Collectively, the work on view inverts the Futurist perspective, turning the sun's gaze in the opposition to its protagonists.

*Let's go!' I said. 'Friends, away! Let's go! Mythology and the Mystic Ideal are defeated at last. We're about to see the Centaur's birth and, soon after, the first flight of Angels!... We must shake at the gates of life, test the bolts and hinges. Let's go! Look there, on the earth, the very first dawn! There's nothing to match the splendor of the sun's red sword, slashing for the first time through our millennial gloom!'*<sup>1</sup>

For Roccasalva, painting is the cynosure of a project inclusive of sculpture, performance, video and installation. His expanded working method proposes a complex set of interconnected structures and strata that fall into non-linear relationships and timelines. In his work, time is conflated, collapsed and debased through a painting project that is both conceptual and anagrammatic.

The installation follows this expanded logic in its distribution of thirteen freestanding walls across the Power Station's two levels. Partitions serve a practical function as display for the paintings, while offering a backdrop and stage to the performance.

Situated at opposing temporal poles, Roccasalva's monochromes are simultaneously *D'apres* (After) examples of Futurist paintings and the *Imprimitura* of future paintings.<sup>2</sup> Suspended between *D'apres* and *Imprimitura*, the past and future, after and before, synchrony and diachrony, the paintings gesture to the past and, in doing so, move ceaselessly beyond the present into a speculative future. Each "polychrome" results from a process of approximation and synthesis: Roccasalva blends the complete range of chromatic information from the historical source material into a singular, monochromatic field of *Imprimitura*. 18k gold nails fix the canvas to the support, signifying a gap between past and future – like the gold spikes used in geological sites to mark the transition between two eras or a symbolic representation of the sun.<sup>3</sup> Suspended between *D'apres* and *Imprimitura*, the panels offer a threshold. In them, one observes both a possible future and its historical necessity.

*Fanfaro* (2014), a sculptural inversion of Caravaggio's *Boy bitten by a Lizard* (1594-1596), portrays a child biting the tail of a prehistoric reptile. In the lizard's hand, a burnt orange sphere made of rice or an *arancino* (an Italian snack) holds the connotation of the dead sun. As a sculpture, the work gestures to the same temporal gap presented in the monochromes, combining pre-history (the lizard) and post-history (the arancino).

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1 The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism by F.T. Marinetti

2 *Imprimitura* is the first paint layer, it's origin from the Middle Ages and where it was used by Italian painters during the Renaissance. The classical technique is used to set the "mood" of the painting.

3 A Global Boundary Stratotype Section and Point, abbreviated GSSP, is an internationally agreed upon reference point on a stratigraphic section which defines the lower boundary of a stage on the geologic time scale.

On the second level, three paintings titled *Il Traviatore* depict a figure in the form of a waiter. This recurring character (first presented in 2002) is always seen carrying a lemon juicer on a metallic tray. The figure is composed in various stages of deconstruction and reconstruction. He is in a state of remittance and collection. A miniature world not visible within the picture plane (perhaps an alternative dimension) is seen within the reflection of his tray cloche. As a messenger of emptiness, the waiter carries a metaphorical void and looks on (perhaps listens in) as a voyeur - his gaze cohering the performance, installation and visitors as they silently fetishize the scrutiny of their making.

A small untitled painting from 2008 bookends the exhibition. Based on an animation titled *Giocondità* (2002), the work follows the route of the sun from an elevated camera perspective, circulating the a church in a prolonged tracking shot. Re-imagined with Roccasalva's recurring motif, the dome is replaced by an oversized juicer. The form and rotation of the reamer actively extracts time while the cathedral functions as a kind of the tomb for the sun. The white band overlaid across the painting surface delineates the camera's path and symbolically points to the diurnal cycle and the sun's ultimate dissolution.

A one-night performance will commence the evening of the opening. A brass band consisting of ten musicians plays an arrangement from the Japanese Super Robot anime cartoon, *Goldrake* (1970's). The players, positioned behind each of the ten monochromes, lose their ability to see each other and communicate visual queues. Their efforts to synchronize the composition subsequently suspend or cacophonously disentangle in un-metered time and distortion. The musical composition takes its repetitive movement from the animation, as the superhero protagonist is launched into the air and transfigured into a halo of light. In this movement of technological embodiment, as articulated in the futurist manifesto, a time faster than the speed of light actualizes itself at the same moment it enters into the void.

Pietro Roccasalva born in 1970, Modica (Italy). Lives and works in Milan (Italy). Recent solo exhibitions include, Kölnischer Kunstverein (DE), Le Magasin in Grenoble (FR), GaMeC in Bergamo (IT) and Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice (IT). His work was part of group exhibitions at David Roberts Art Foundation in London (GB), Centre for Contemporary Art in Warsaw, Bonniers Konsthall in Stockholm (SE), Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago (USA), MoMA PS1 in New York (USA), MAXXI in Rome (IT), Kadist Art Foundation in Paris (FR), S.M.A.K. - Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent (BE), amongst many others. He participated in the Venice Biennial in 2009, the second Torino Triennial in 2008, Manifesta 7 in 2008 and the Prague Biennial in 2007.

*The Power Station thanks David Kordansky Gallery, Galleria Zero and Zeno-X Gallery for their assistance with the exhibition.*