



6 OTTOBRE 2022
27 NOVEMBRE 2022

Museo Diocesano di Faenza
Spazio espositivo di
Santa Maria dell'Angelo

6 OTTOBRE 2022
16 OTTOBRE 2022

Galleria della Molinella

FAENZA

CONTEMPLATING THE ART OF MOSAIC

Giovanni Gardini

Co-curator

MISZMASZ is an exhibition that brings together, in the name of the art of mosaic, seven Polish artists, all teachers of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. The fruits of their artistic research, so different in terms of poetics and techniques, are united by a desire to bring numerous elements together, be they sequins, arrows, electric cables, shells, photographs or other materials, and by a tenacious and original process of recomposition, which conceptually refers to the ancient techniques of mosaic art. Indeed, all the works on display can be seen through this vision in which the dimension of fragmentation and recomposition, typical of mosaics, appears as a very natural process. Hence the title of the exhibition, MISZMASZ, a Polish word of German origin, related to the English "mishmash", which - as Matylda Tracewska explains in her essay - on the one hand, indicates disorder and confusion, and therefore refers to the diversity of approach of the various artists presented, and, on the other, can also mean mosaic, and, in this sense, cannot fail to highlight the idea of mosaics inherent, even unconsciously, in the work of the artists involved in the exhibition in Faenza.

Maciek Duchowski presents different but deeply connected artworks. The first of the works, entitled Solo, consists of a triptych in which cut electric cables are assembled, divided by colour, and placed side by side in essential wooden frames to form a dense and vibrant texture, pulsating with energy. The threads that Duchowski has meticulously arranged alongside one another, avoiding any interstice that might interrupt the decorative flow that binds them together, might appear, at first glance, as precious murrine glass. However, if you look closely enough and lose yourself in them, other images relating to mineral materials or satellite visions of mountainous landscapes or deep sea abysses. Yet, above all, these works aim to focus on the technological advancements and on those flows of energy which, as the artist points out, are related both to modern technologies and to the spiritual side of humanity. The second series of works bears the English title So?, which in itself hints at various meanings, even with such an inciteful tone as, "Well then?" or "Now what?". Each of the letters making up this question, together with the question mark, is shown in the different panels of the triptych. However, they are not immediately visible, as if to make the question even more evocative or enigmatic. The question remains suspended in air, like the

urgent and deep questions that challenge human life every day, such as war, the pandemic, or the environmental issue. A simple bucket, represented in the series entitled *Finish*, completes the installation. The word “finish”, also represented on the surface, indicates the particular paint used in construction and, at the same time, engages in a dialogue which is both visual and conceptual, with the question posed in the three paintings - So? - to which it is as if a most dramatic response could follow: *finisch*, finished. Through this installation the artist seems to ask himself the big question with respect to the times in which we live, a question that takes on apocalyptic connotations: are we really facing the end of the world? So, what are we going to do?

The bucket also refers back to the other two works. The three works were painted with the finishing paint contained therein, while a dense network of electric cables fills it and embellishes it to the top.

The title of *Virginis Mariae Gratiarum* is given to two site-specific works by **Arkadiusz Karapuda**, specially designed for the Faenza exhibition, from which emerges the deep spiritual bond uniting the cities of Faenza and Warsaw in devotion to Our Lady of Graces, whose intercession saved both cities from the plague. Starting from the idea of broken arrows - the identifying symbol of this particular Marian iconography in which the compassionate and prompt intercession of the Madonna towards humanity is encapsulated - Karapuda has created two visually impactful installations along the walls of the side chapel of Santa Maria dell'Angelo, giving the idea of modern *ex voto* offered during the Covid-19 pandemic. These are made up of two unusual mandalas, consisting of 370 elements each, arrows that the artist has alternately painted gold and blue, respectively to signal the power of God and the mercy of the Virgin towards those who entrust themselves to her. From a formal point of view, the two installations, while referring to each other, move in different dimensions. The first presents arrows that move outwards from the centre, while the second proposes an opposing movement, in which the single elements converge towards the interior.

Maja Kitajewska presents two series of works united by a highly refined technique and a surprising choice of materials. *Echo Rhapsody*, a project initially made up of seven elements, is here synthesized by three mirrors, entirely covered by sequins, which have inexorably lost their ability to reflect the surrounding reality, and, to use an image expressed by the artist, are like an unanswered echo. Their vibrant surfaces hint at geometric movements, but, despite this attempt to restore some form, they remain worlds closed in on themselves. The second cycle of works, whose title *Shake the Disease* is inspired by the song by Depeche Mode, was born from a combination of painting and embroidery. The three canvases exhibited in Faenza, part of a larger series of six, are works poised between harmony and decay. The presence of flowers, rendered by fast and vibrant painting, transmits a light and serene atmosphere. However, when one approaches the work, the material so pulsating with life and luminous, thanks to the use of beads and semi-precious elements, reveals itself in all its restlessness through the form of insects that seem to want to suffocate, if not actually destroy, so much beauty.

The works of **Jan Mioduszewski**, born from the combination of painting and sculpture, are a cultured and elegant meditation on space. *Linea*, a site-specific installation composed of a series of recycled elements from veneered chipboard painted in imitation of wood, creates a visual interference inside the side chapel of Santa Maria dell'Angelo, dividing it into two unequal areas. *Sgocciolare* is a small wall sculpture composed of two partially repainted fragments of furniture. To use the artist's words, it is a reflection on the paint, on the rhythm moving between the two nearby objects, their right proportion and appropriate distance. *Scaffale* and *Commode e la sua avventura* are part of the series of works on modernist

furniture from the age of socialism. They are works that deliberately play on the illusion of the object, of its material - what looks like wood is actually painted aluminium - and on its fragmentation. The most important element is not what the observer sees, but the emptiness that flows, uninterruptedly, between the various parts.

Igor Przybylski presents the fruit of his ten-year artistic research. His passion for public transport has led him to document - and collect! - dozens of images of buses over the years, with a particular penchant for old models linked to communist era manufacturing. The fascination that these forms of the recent past hold for him has leads him to an incessant search across the whole of Poland, visiting as many as 180 cities, with the aim of restoring not only the colours but also the aesthetic essence of the urban and interurban transport of his nation. This artistic project of his also coincides with a very precious work of documentation of a reality that is inexorably disappearing. His research, related to everything inherent in the means of transport - from bus tickets to old railway station signs - is therefore a capillary mapping of a large territory that recalls an extremely stimulating aspect of recent history. The numerous photographs, taken from points of view that are always the same, are then combined - as if they were the pieces of a mosaic - to create visions that are as original as they are alienating.

The works that **Elwira Sztetner** has chosen for the Faenza exhibition belong to two important projects - *Anatomia della coscienza e Superorganismo* - which look at the natural world through a careful and aware gaze. Her highly refined works preserve a profound reflection on the fragile and delicate relationship between man, animals and plants, aiming to make people think about the ecological issue, felt as urgent as ever, inviting the viewer to take a responsible attitude towards the environmental issue. *Anatomia della coscienza* consists of a series of works which, to use the artist's words, imagine a utopian democracy of all species and juxtapose the brains of various mammals, among these man. They are reproduced through embroidery, in a scale as close to reality as possible. *Superorganismo*, an open project that Sztetner has been carrying out since 2017, is a work that will not leave the observer indifferent. Anyone standing in front of this work will have the idea of plunging into an enchanted forest, surrounded by the smell of musk, and even the most attentive observer will have the doubt of actually being in front of natural forms. Over time, this work has grown, changed and will continue to do so in unexpected directions, as if it were an organism that lives a life of its own. But above all it is an exercise in hope; every single element, in fact, created starting from the recovery of various types of waste - be they plastic or fabric - finds a new generative possibility in the artist's dedication and in her skilled hands.

Matylda Tracewska, through a series of delicate and silent works - at times profoundly autobiographical - invites the observer to reflect on life, on relationships between people, on the dearest affections and the indelible memory they leave behind. For some time, her artistic research has been drawing lymph from the mosaic language. Works such as *Night and day* or *Richiamo* reflect her specific attention and, at the same time, show the inexhaustible possibilities of the mosaic. *Night and day*, an installation that owes its title to a piece by Cole Porter, draws inspiration from the ancient Japanese game of *kai awase* in which previously separated pairs of painted shells must be reunited. Tracewska, reflecting on the profound meaning that underlies this game linked to the concept of unity - and therefore symbolically on the desire for fullness - questions the dynamics between people and the conditioning that culture imposes. Starting from these considerations, she decides to leave her project open, breaking the rigid scheme on which the game is based to offer an infinite possibility of perspectives and compositions. *Richiamo* was born as a site-specific installation for the Church of Santa Maria dell'Angelo. This work is connected to a childhood memory when, on the

occasion of a trip to the mountains, the presence of grazing animals was perceived exclusively through the sound of cowbells and not through sight. Starting from this auditory memory, this poignant work develops on the theme of the presence/absence of those who are no longer there. Many needles, pieces of a sound mosaic, are combined to create a musical instrument in which sound is one of the possibilities to remember and feel close, in a new way and no longer through the gaze, the presence of the beloved ones who are no longer here.