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STEFANO BOCCALINI
Political Economy/Human Geographies

Curated by Adelina von Fürstenberg

September 17 - October 25 2008



Opening: Wednesday September 17 - 18.00

Opening Hours: Tuesday - Friday
09.30 - 12.00 14.30 - 18.30
Saturday
09.30 - 12.00 14.30 - 17.00
Sunday/Monday Closed

Stefano Boccalini was born in Milan in 1963, where he lives and works. Since the beginning of his career he has distinguished himself for his "Public Art" projects and interventions: art that is characterised by a strong personal commitment towards social issues.

Since 2001 he has dedicated himself to a series of projects based on the participation of the inhabitants of Milan's Isola quarter, an area that has undergone considerable urban transformation and where he currently lives.

One of these works is *Stone Island*: "This is one of the projects that in the last five years I have activated inside and with the help of the neighbourhood... It is a work about recovering the memory of a district through the direct testimony of its inhabitants, the oldest ones, who have lived in the area for the longest time and who, perhaps, are now marginalised: not in order to look towards the past for a possible reconstruction, but to involve everyone actively in the process of change. Certainly, collective history and personal stories do not take on an unimportant function in an effective transformational project".

Out of this experience the artist has made lambda prints: intense portraits of these elderly people, protagonists at last; currently these images are exhibited at the XV Quadriennale d'Arte in Rome.

For Boccalini, collaboration between people is fundamental in the creation of a work: he claims to have tried to create a bond from the start with the inhabitants in all of the places where he has decided to undertake a project. One of these places is Serravalle Pistoiese, where he created a public archive, starting from personal effects of the people living in the town: photographs of marriages, first communions, local celebrations, football games, etc. that constituted a "Family Album". The family that Boccalini is referring to is the extended family made up of those who belong to the medieval village, who handed over their personal memories to the archive.

The artist has presented his work in various international exhibitions, among them are: "Donna Donne" curated by Adelina von Fürstenberg (Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, 2005; Sesc Paulista, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 2007; Musée de Carouge, Geneva, 2003), "Fragments d'un discours italien", Musée d'art Moderne e Contemporain Mamco, Geneva, curated by Christian Bernard, 2003.

In the works presented at Studio Dabbeni, Stefano Boccalini renounces the direct relationship with the community, yet continues his reflections about problems of an anthropological nature that extend, in *Political Economy/Human Geographies*, into a political dimension. The artist has decided to use maps and geographic plans of the world, of single continents, and of nations. He has treated them with a process that leaves the paper creased so that the borders between countries are no longer clearly perceptible. This demonstrates that his reflection can be extended to a worldwide dimension in which geographical confines are no longer important. Onto these maps, Boccalini has transferred, in relation to, in this case, the individual nations, the dramatic figures regarding the sale of arms and the number of war deaths in each country. In these works, then, there is no longer a direct relationship with a community but "problems that concern us all": this is the link to his previous works, according to the explanation given by the artist. He points out how, more often than not, the data that is supplied by the media remains abstract, as do the same news accounts, which we are bombarded by, that are rarely retained and become dispersed. Hence, he has chosen to offer these numbers in a visually precise way; the borders are not clear but the numbers are always clearly legible so that your eye is drawn to some of the conflicts and political situations that connote present reality.

Contrasting the vacuity of many of the artistic experience that we come across, Stefano Boccalini carries out a deep reflection on the dramatic reality of a system, of which he offers a personal and original vision.