

CAPITAL PAUSE / slower and closer
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The curatorial proposal for this edition of the Venice Biennale titled All the World's Futures¹ is a project devoted to finding a new interpretation of the relationship between art and artists and the current state of things. Every era is witness to innumerable human and environmental catastrophes, national and cross-border misunderstandings and tensions, endemic diseases, chaos, emergencies and conflict. Artists address many of these issues in order to understand and challenge them by using their own means. Any possible analysis of these situations, their causes and consequences, can never be linear, and neither is it possible to address them in such a way.

There are artists who focus on these issues with symbolic practices, through activities involving denunciation (performances, public installations, action across multiple networks); others do so from politico-social settings, bolstered by documentary material (archives, the press, the media as a whole), etc. In every case, the different approaches constitute the *parliament* to which Enwezor refers.² A parliament of opinions and ideas which might be enhanced by these intersecting "filters", which together could collaborate towards a deeper reading of such complex and unapproachable realities. At first glance, the work of Marco Maggi may appear to be removed from these approaches and practices. However, it carries within itself the demand for a subjective experience that implies breaking with any unconscious or accidental operation. In fact, his work demands an unusual level of attention, which unveils and reveals behavioural aspects that necessarily become political. As Adriano Pedrosa suggests,³ it is a silent game, delicate and slow, which constructs its own subtle political style, masked, even, by the beauty and radiance of the works.

1 Enwezor, O. (2014). "All the World's Futures. Venice: La Biennale", available online from: <http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/exhibition/enwezor/>

2 Ibid.

3 Pedrosa, A. (2008). "Slow Politics". São Paulo: Nara Roesler gallery.

Global Myopia (pencil&paper), is an unconventional exhibiting device, where drawing is the disputed focus and support, expanded to off-the-scale boundaries and easy to apprehend. Maggi has produced an adhesive and personal alphabet containing ten thousand elements (white stickers), with which he draws for months, sticking and folding them on the walls.⁴ In order to be visible and exist, in this case, on a wall that is also white, these small white pieces of paper need a special type of lighting. The light needs to be even so that it is capable of shaping highly defined shadows.

Maggi builds on the basis of signs, cut lines, shadows and codes that form links and are related to each other, generating language. Moving from sign to construction, he has been able to produce a dictionary constituted by a number of small pieces, on the basis of which he achieves the most discreet monumentality. While in the case of a great many artists, central objectives become diluted when submitted to the demands of large spaces (biennials, fairs, museums, etc.), in Maggi, conversely, his proposal increases in density without losing its meaning in a closer association. Like all of his previous works, this installation calls for direct experience; there is no other way to approach the work unless physically present at the exhibition site. In strictly physical terms, it is necessary to shorten the distances; it is this very proximity that will enable one to become immersed in his work, in a language that will say nothing ahead of time. This need for proximity, this need to focus, is no small thing if we also consider that it is the means through which we shall be empowered to construct an analytical subjectivity that will support us in our critical consumption.

Maggi's interest focuses on the quality and intensity of our gaze, on the time that we devote to each pseudo-conscious act and, in consequence, on the spatial aspect that is, in every case, the deciding factor in his work. Issues associated with representation and its links to the audience are conditioned by space, in terms of both distance and perceptual capacity, and by time, in terms of attention and analytical capacity. These three focal

⁴ Maggi has expounded on three-dimensional drawing on numerous opportunities. "DDDrawing" was the term he used to imbue the most ancient medium in human history with technological nuances and make humorous reference to a kind of contemporaneity.

points: space, time and representation, synchronize and give meaning to Marco Maggi's proposition.

Emotional Space

Much of the art we see is made possible by technology. After access to the Internet became widespread, institutions, museums, curators and artists have begun to use these tools in order to virally disseminate activities and projects. The degree of closeness and accuracy achieved in viewing works has evolved in such a way that we can now go on virtual journeys through archives and even "take part" in real time in most of what is going on in the world. In short, at present we approach the production of contemporary art by means of a series of devices that act as our mediators. It is on the basis of this "duplication" of the artistic experience that we often learn about, think, give our opinions, select and even evaluate.

Many scholars and analysts are debating this issue, with a variety of motivations. Carson Chan recently observed⁵ that the substantive primary material and challenge for curators today is not necessarily art but space. Chan makes an analogy between experience and knowledge and concludes that any situation that does not include experience can simply be considered an act of faith. "To know," says Chan, "is to experience, without which one can only believe."⁶ This proposition is particularly relevant in the case of Maggi's work and can constitute a point to be considered when approaching it.

As we have seen, his work needs this experience in space. In *Global Myopia*, we can speak of two types of space, different in scale and quality. On the one hand, the space occupied by the installation, which has an impact on practically any proposal, and on the other, an even more subjective and specific space: the space between the work and the viewer. This space will be determined by each viewer and will be the outcome of establishing the distance that enables each of us to see. We can call this distance, the space of our regard. It is an emotional and non-transferable space suggested by the specific decisions made by the installation's design, and in particular, by the carefully thought-out decisions regarding the hierarchy conferred upon

5 Chan, C. (2014). "Measures of an Exhibition: Space, Not Art, Is the Curator's Primary Material". *Filip*, 13 (Spring 2011).

6 Ibid.

the details of the work, always considering the view from the perspective of the viewers. How close will viewers need to approach in order to be able to see each successive detail, the nods given by one space to another, the minute shadows that pass and sketch upon these enormous surfaces? These operations are always meticulously thought out and tested again and again. There are very firm decisions made regarding the scale of the works.

If we analyse some of the images in the artist's earlier works, we can easily pinpoint some constants that are maintained today: the decision to suggest minimal scales, the reiteration and accumulation of disjointed lines and the construction of situations on the basis of abstract codes. As his work unfolded and began to occupy large surfaces, it never lost that extent of detail. As his spatial challenges broadened, Maggi further reduced the scale of his drawings and incisions.

Maggi has traversed the entire spectrum of traditional drawing in formal terms. In his use of pencil - black graphite - he has been through surfaces such as paper and ceramics. He also swiftly transformed the lines of his pencil drawings by pressing on sensitive surfaces, such as aluminium foil, or produced by cutting on somewhat more resistant material such as Plexiglas and mirrors, only to return to paper and through it arrive at another form of making lines, the result of decisive cutting.

His series on paper have evolved and mutated from pure white to the use of very restrained colour, generally limited to the inclusion of black and primary colours. However, in his *Turner*⁷ series he appropriated symbolic images taken from the history of modern art and introduced colour in its fullest spectrum, based on the range of colours used in the works he chose, by artists such as Sonia Delaney, Andy Warhol, Marcel Duchamp, Yves Klein or Piet Mondrian.

Maggi has generated a three-dimensional work built

⁷ This is the series he called The Ted Turner Collection. From CNN to DNA. It represents the humorous and incisive style of work and of critiquing in which Maggi refers to events that affect us. His review is always political and strictly contemporary. This inclusion of some of the most emblematic images in the history of modern art compose a criticism of the consumption of images constructed and disseminated by the media, in this case in particular, by the CNN network, run by Ted Turner.

upon a reading of the front and the back. One of the surfaces is occupied by these historical images and the other is entirely white, with a number of cuts that very discreetly reveal something of the image behind. He thus incorporated not only some of the formal aspects of these works, but also some of their conceptual aspects which, on the basis of the title he gave them, add to that other layer of political meaning and criticism.

In this series, Maggi continued using his grids, a resource that is also repeated in several of his installations. Two-dimensional and three-dimensional works built on the threshold between engraving and sculpture, as the artist himself explains. The spatial choices he proposes for each exhibition are substantial enough to provide guidelines or suggest a form of perception. In this respect, he has explored genuinely interesting variants in each new installation.

His *Hotbeds* series is key to understand how his work has evolved. In it we may consider two variants that modify space considerably and in particular, how space is used. In simple terms, there is a version involving reams and grids of paper on the floor and another with reams of paper on carpets of more paper. In the second case, the protocol for circulating through the space of the exhibit provides discreet guidance and necessarily implies an investment of time and the viewer's very clear willingness to take part. In both proposals, the reams of paper support other paper works that contain the multiple situations generated in them by minute cuts and folds.

In many of Maggi's installations it is common to see people adopting curious positions; people bending down or stretching up in an attempt to see more, or to see again some detail that they noticed minutes before in another phase of the space. In this way, what Maggi calls a "protocol of looking"⁸ is established, a period which must necessarily be sustained in order to build an emotional space between the viewer and the work; a distance that enables us to look, approach an idea, modify it, reformulate it and rethink what we are looking at. The aim is to generate an intimate and subjective

8 Interview with Marco Maggi by Whitehot Magazine in March 2009, available online from: <http://whitehotmagazine.com/articles/2009-interview-with-marco-maggi/1773>

relationship between the object and the public. *Global Myopia* is a new exhibiting device that once again involves two of the basic elements of drawing: pencil and paper. The first, in this case, has been transformed into a machine that was coldly prepared for drawing but destined not to make a single line. The paper, on this occasion, is not the support for the drawing, but the material generating it. Nothing is what it seems, and yet everything is exactly what we think we are looking at. The support has expanded to boundaries beyond the usual scale, and this scale of necessity modifies the relationship between the work and the viewer. Spectators will enter a drawing and be surrounded by it.⁹ For Maggi, myopia becomes an advantage, being near-sighted forces us to come closer, to cut the distance between things and ourselves; it is this action that is fundamental. The protocol requires us to stop, hesitate and refocus; and to eliminate the space between the work and the observer. This distance, which is often minute is what Maggi considers a priority in his work. To be able to cut that distance, activate myopic awareness, introduce a question which makes us squint in order to seek a focal point: this is his objective. This work is activated and becomes "effective" to the extent that this bond, which is undoubtedly demanding for the audience, is generated and sustained. Maggi proposes reducing the scale of the drawing, making it hard to see, in an attempt to "humanize art".¹⁰ Once again, his focus is not the object but the subject, the specific protocol and the process of looking. A process that in addition is strictly subjective and constructs an experience that cannot be transferred¹¹ and requires a specific level of attention. Jonathan Crary¹² recalls a conversation between Fredric Jameson and Anders Stephanson¹³ in which they are discussing Postmodernism and sustain that we are forced to accept the condition of switching our attention swiftly from one thing to another as

9 "Fast viewers see, from far away, a drawing as a blank sheet. Slow viewers can read the same drawing ten times, switching perspectives and conclusions." Ibid.

10 Interview with Marco Maggi by Whitehot Magazine in March 2009. Available online from: <http://whitehotmagazine.com/articles/2009-interview-with-marco-maggi/1773>

11 Ibid.

12 Crary, J. (1999). *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

13 Jameson, F. and Stephanson, A. (1989). "Regarding Postmodernism. A Conversation with Fredric Jameson", in *Social Text*, n° 21, *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989), pp. 3-30.

something natural. What we see, whether online or in physical reality, is reconfigured into what we notice and particularly, how long we notice something. It is this attention span that Maggi is referring to. "To watch theatre, a movie or video, or to hear a symphony, you need to spend a specific amount of time with the work. For example, a three minutes fifteen seconds song requires three minutes and fifteen seconds of your time. Reading a book is more flexible, but it is not completely flexible, because it is impossible to read a novel in sixteen seconds, which is the average amount of time spent by the public looking at a work of art in a museum. Drawings are not so much related to space as they are related to time: no time frame is included in the 'drawing protocol'... the viewer is therefore free and the challenge is to expand the freedom range from sixteen seconds to sixteen minutes or sixteen hours."¹⁴ It is here that we combine this need for a particular distance with a specific time, which will enable us to approach the experience of this work.

Time (psychological)

At first sight, time seems to be an entirely banal matter which we come across in everyday narratives and routines, and as such, too trivial to be analysed. However, there are few subjects as timeless as time itself. Time is one of the most ancient and complex subjects of philosophical debate and artistic production. It underlies nearly all human activities and, as a result, fully intervenes in social, political, religious, economic and cultural matters.

In the arts, from the Enlightenment to well into the Modernism of the sixties, it was assumed that a painting or a sculpture represented a single moment in time. In it, the artist hoped to capture a significant event and reproduce it in every detail. The most widely acclaimed works of art were those in which it was possible to extrapolate and capture immediately all preceding and subsequent times at once.¹⁵

In the fifties, and above all, the sixties, considerable changes emerged in the way time was

¹⁴ Interview with Marco Maggi by *Whitehot Magazine* in March 2009.

¹⁵ Ross, C. (2013). *The Past is the Present, It's the Future Too. The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

handled, particularly with the introduction of the new information-based technologies, which accelerated the process of rationalizing time, leading to feelings of fear in the face of the transient nature of things.¹⁶

Lucio Fontana, in his "White Manifesto",¹⁷ had already begun to reflect upon the issues of time and science in the arts.¹⁸ He employed concepts and concerns that were common at that time, but also to other periods in history. Considerations on speed¹⁹ and the union between time and space²⁰ very quickly became reference points in the fields of art and philosophy.

The ideas wielded by Fontana in the middle of the 20th century were also related to the original concepts of the South American vanguards and are related - through some of their not strictly formal points - to the theoretical ideas expounded by leading figures in history of art, such as Lygia Clark and Jesús Rafael Soto. This foreshadows a unique link with Maggi's work, which is related to the experience of his work and its emotional, perceptual and physical aspects. The experimental strategies of this period also involved physical aspects of perception, focusing on the kinetic and optical complexities of objects. Fontana's cuts and slashes are part of this evolutionary process in his thinking and of a convulsed and reflexive environment, which advocated for art as a self-questioning setting.²¹

¹⁶ Lee, P. (2004). *Chronophobia. On Time in the Art of the 1960's*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

¹⁷ Fontana, L. (1946). "White Manifesto". Buenos Aires: Escuela de Arte Altamira.

¹⁸ In the spring of 1946, Lucio Fontana presented his "White Manifesto" with a happening: an intervention in a house, flinging colours, fragments of material and items of all kinds onto the wall. This informal and materially expressive movement was already apparent in his work during the thirties. In 1947, he wrote his "Primo Manifesto dello Spazialismo", and in 1948, the "Secondo Manifesto" - theories that would later acquire a special meaning for Equipo 57 (Team 57) - and, above all, the "White Manifesto" of Buenos Aires, for many of the ideas that Oteiza imported into Franco's Spain upon his return to Bilbao in 1949.

¹⁹ "Peaceful living has disappeared. The notion of speed is constant in the life of man," in Fontana, L. (1946). "White Manifesto". Buenos Aires: Escuela de Arte Altamira.

²⁰ "Invoking this mutation which has occurred in the nature of man, in psychological and moral changes and of all human relations and activities, we abandon the practice of known forms of art and address the development of art based on the unity of time and space." Ibid.

²¹ The beginning of these cuts on canvas using Stanley knives has been established as 1958. An infinite number of symbolic, sexual and

In a context in which rapid change became standard, recognizing the passage of time and its consequences became the best way of exposing the hidden and oppressive features of society and its technological rationality. As such, time very soon became a significant vehicle for criticism and divergence. Many artists, following different trends, have expressed the contradictions they have felt subjected to in the face of cognitive excess, while acknowledging the attraction they feel towards these successive technological and scientific developments. Futurist or constructivist manifestos, for example, displayed this fascination and irrevocable positioning in the face of "evolution" and the unstoppable idea of moving towards the "future".

Although contemporary art has become a place for temporal experimentation, we also coexist with an increasingly attentive focus on the past. Interest in the past and in memory "represents, rather, an attempt to reduce the speed of information processing, to resist the dissolution of time in the synchrony of archives, in order to recover a form of contemplation beyond the universe of simulation and beyond high-speed networks, to claim an anchorage spot in a bewildering world. A world which is frequently threatening in its heterogeneity, in its lack of synchronicity and its overload of information".²² The problem, however, is not only how to represent that past,²³ but particularly, how to remember it, inasmuch as it inevitably vanishes from our collective memory.

The work of Marco Maggi is established in a stage of human time, which can be considered in Huyssen's terms,²⁴ as a synchronized anchorage that eludes any excess. Be it related to information or discourse; to resources or any kind of dramatic effect. There is in the work of Maggi a necessary awareness of time; of production time, to which is added the installation time and the time which viewers need in

metaphysical possibilities have been attributed to these cuts. Lucio Fontana, *Concepto Espacial*.

22 Huyssen, A. (1994). *Twilight Memories. Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. New York: Routledge.

23 Boris Groys suggests that documentation can play a fundamental role in the representation of memory and the history of art. "The documentation of art, which by definition consists in images and texts which can be reproduced, acquires through an installation an aura of originality, of being alive, of the historical," in Groys, B. (2008). *Art Power*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

24 Huyssen, A. (1994). *Twilight Memories. Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. New York: Routledge.

order to apprehend his proposals. Three different times which together enable the outcome of this work. The two first phases of the installation, productive and propositional, are the purview only of the producer, and in this specific project involve six months of studio work, to which are added two months of on-site work, during which this vocabulary built thousands of kilometres away is deployed and transformed into "text" in its new home.

Why is it important for us to spend time quantifying the artist's work?

Much has been said about authorship and authenticity, but at this point, the most attractive aspect of the current debate is a return to considering the value of the work in somewhat different terms to those that we are used to. We no longer relate the time devoted to a work as a possible way of quantifying its value, according to Marxist terms, but it is perhaps possible to consider its value, in current terms, as measured by the time that viewers devote to a work. It is therefore the members of the public, who approach and come on a pilgrimage again and again to these spaces devoted to art, who can ascribe any kind of value to what they are being faced with.

If art, in Marcel Duchamp's definition,²⁵ is whatever the artist decides is art, we could today put forward the hypothesis that art is whatever viewers take the time to look at and confirm as art. The state of authenticity of an object is determined by individually motivated action. Boris Groys²⁶ had already considered that the real difference between an original and a copy was its proximity to a viewer. "If we make our way towards a work of art, then it is an original."²⁷

What Groys calls "make our way to",²⁸ Jonathan Crary refers to as "paying attention to",²⁹ in such a way that the work is produced through its intention. In other words, and returning to Duchamp, if art was whatever the artist wanted and had established as art, the subjective agency now harbours the capacity of wanting art, at least as a category of

25 Smith, T., Enwezor, O. and Condee, N., (2009). *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

26 Groys, B. (2008). *Art Power*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

27 Ibid.

28 Crary, J. (1999). *Suspensions of Perception. Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

29 Ibid.

perception. A work of art, or any other cultural object of late Capitalism, can never, on its own, keep up this storm of evolving signifiers and ensure significant consistency. Maggi already referred to this in his remarks on his project for the São Paulo Biennial,³⁰ where he was, in fact, presenting the first example of his *Global Myopia* proposal. He suggested that it is the observer, and not the work, who is responsible for generating levels of diversity.

If art only exists in the dimension of an encounter, what is the quality of this encounter and how can it be prolonged so that it exceeds the sixteen seconds that we statistically devote to looking at works of art in an exhibition?³¹

We certainly cannot state that it is only the "works" that demand time and space in order to be genuinely grasped that are liable to become art objects and, therefore, "desirable objects", objects of value or speculation, but it does seem interesting to think that this primary need for something tangible can become a new "value", when all else tends to fade away.

Representation

In *Bitter Lake*,³² director Adam Curtis suggests that we are living in a world in which, increasingly, very little seems to make sense. The depiction of events and their actors by those in power has been simplified so ruthlessly that it is no longer possible to make use of them to understand the innumerable daily problems and challenges we are witnessing, not to mention any possible action involving the social and material worlds. In this documentary, successive conflicts in Afghanistan are used as an eloquent example of the failure of the narratives and discourse of public policies, but it could equally well have included other examples, such as the financial deregulation of the late nineties, bank bailouts, clandestine anti-terrorism

30 Interview with Marco Maggi by Whitehot Magazine in March 2009. Available online from: <http://whitehotmagazine.com/articles/2009-interview-with-marco-maggi/1773>

31 Ibid

32 *Bitter Lake*, a documentary produced by the BBC in 2015 and available online from: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p02gyz6b/adam-curtis-bitter-lake>

mass electronic surveillance programmes,³³ or the invasion of Crimea. In all of these events, and many more, decisions have been framed in simplistic terms: good against evil, right against wrong. The fact is that most politicians today believe that simple (binary) stories are more effective to gather popular support, and evidence shows that these simplifications can be extremely convincing. According to Deborah Stone,³⁴ simple political narratives "exert a powerful control over our psyche, they offer the promise of solving the problems that we fear". A compassionate narrative with an easy choice at the end is thus always preferable to a long, complicated and often inconclusive report. However, if societies were capable of tolerating these moral imperatives in the past, their acceptance is now being increasingly challenged and brought into question. As proof of this, we have only to consider movements such as Occupy Wall Street, Euromaidan, Podemos, or Syriza. Decades of binary options have resulted in making us all feel lost and incredulous. Clearly, the representation crisis is not restricted to political or economic fields. In art, representation is also being increasingly challenged. According to Hito Steyerl,³⁵ this crisis encompasses not only the way in which contemporary art represents the world, but also how art and artists are represented and represent themselves. In fact, the terms "political art" and "social art" are becoming increasingly controversial. In 1984, Fredric Jameson wrote³⁶ that "the new political art (if it is possible at all) will have to hold to the truth of Postmodernism, that is to say, to its fundamental object - the world space of multinational capital - at the same time at which it achieves a breakthrough to some as yet unimaginable new mode of representing this last..." Nearly thirty years after Jameson's sceptical words, questions about these potential developments and possibilities

33 Prism, a programme operated by the National Security Agency (NSA) of the United States of America, and Muscular, a programme operated by the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) of the United Kingdom.

34 Stone, D. (2001). *Policy Paradox: The Art Of Political Decision Making*. New York: W.W. Norton.

35 Steyerl, H. (2010). "Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post-Democracy", in *E-flux Journal*, 21 (12). Available online from: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/politics-of-art-contemporary-art-and-the-transition-to-post-democracy/>

36 Jameson, F. (1984). «Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism», in *New Left Review*, 146.

for art seem to have disappeared. In 2009, in an open letter to the Istanbul Biennial, a group calling itself the Resistanbul Commissariat of Culture suggested³⁷ that we should all “stop pretending that the popularity of *politically engaged art* within the museums, and markets over the last few years has anything to do with really changing the world. We have to stop pretending that taking risks in the space of art, pushing boundaries of form, and disobeying the conventions of culture, making art about politics makes any difference. We have to stop pretending that art is a free space, autonomous from webs of capital and power.” This discourse is added to many others that are continuously reviewing the possible “use” of art as an area for action. More recently, when writing about the opening of the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris, Maria Lind suggested³⁸ that such institutions, or “amusement parks”, have “no context, neither historical nor contemporary, neither art-specific nor social, neither political nor economic. There is also no form of embracing what has been selected and combined outside of an attempt at canon-making.” In addition to the fact that art has failed in its attempt to represent the world, the role played by artists themselves, who often act as “ethical cynics”³⁹ is also being increasingly brought into question.

The work of Marco Maggi concerns itself exhaustively with representation. His language is the most binary of all possible languages, as we have seen: white/black, empty/full, light/shadow; a whole universe generated on the basis of the most absolutely austere resources. In essence, it is a basic compendium of what drawing meant in the past and of the parameters of meaning that it can build in the present. The two simplest and most accessible elements – pencil and paper – are the protagonists of this 21st century proposal. When we are faced with his work, at first glance it seems difficult to

37 “Resistanbul Commissariat of Culture (2009). Conceptual Framework of Direnal-Istanbul Resistance Days: What Keeps Us Not-Alive?» Available online from: <https://resistanbul.wordpress.com/2009/09/04/conceptual-framework-of-direnal-istanbul-resistance-days-what-keeps-us-not-alive/>

38 Lind, M. (2014). “Funhouses and fairytales”, in *Artreview*, December Issue. Available online from: http://artreview.com/opinion/december_2014_opinion_maria_lind/

39 Camnitzer, L. (1995). “The Corruption in the Arts / the Art of Corruption”, in *Neue Bildende Kunst*, 4/5. Available online from: http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/magazine/articles/2012/corruption_arte

understand what we are looking at, and perhaps, as Adam Curtis suggests in *Bitter Lake*, we should move away from the feeling that overcomes the protagonist of *Solaris*⁴⁰ when he returns to Earth and is confronted with a frozen lake. In *Global Myopia* we must again have confidence in what we see; pencil and paper, light and shadow, and understand that they are capable of generating a form of representation that challenges the senses and breaks down certain rationales.

Conclusion

As we recalled at the beginning, one of the main questions posed in *All the World's Futures* is just what art and artists can do in the face of the current state of things: "How can artists, thinkers, writers, [...] through images, objects, words, [...] sound bring together publics in acts of looking, listening, responding, engaging, speaking in order to make sense of the current upheaval?"

In *Global Myopia*, as in the proposal triggered by Enwezor, the conscious engagement of the public is promoted. The director's question is, in short, whether art, in any of its forms and formats, is capable of helping us to reshape ourselves, make us more analytical, more acute and critical in the face of the reality we are confronting. Also, whether we in this field, which is often so elitist, so far removed from reality, can help to promote some kind of collective reflection, some kind of action to modify us in our readings and, in consequence, change our actions as well, and, as Antoni Muntadas said, become able to understand what we see: perception requires our involvement.⁴¹

Maggi's work promotes this involved perception, which is also, at a perhaps prior stage, participatory. These opportunities for pause and

⁴⁰ When he approaches his father's house, after his return from *Solaris*, Kelvin, the protagonist, realizes that something very peculiar is going on. His father appears to be unaware of the fact that it is raining inside the house. The scene ends with them embracing and the spectator grasps that the house and the lake are on *Solaris* and that Kelvin has not returned to Earth.

⁴¹ "Warning: Perception requires involvement", this work has been translated into several languages and been depicted on a variety of media, from flyers to interventions on façades, as a way to disseminate this concept virally.

thought can be essential when facing the current unease of our times, to help, in its infinite discretion, to arrest something within ourselves that will enable us to look and think from another perspective and perhaps build in a modified direction. It is possible that at this, apparently adverse, juncture, where narratives are not reality, drawing is not drawing and words are meaningless signs, is where the significance lies of a work that promotes rebellion against the direction that we are following. This system of signs denounces in silence, in the deepest silence, the direction that humanity is taking in moving, thinking, living at a rate that prevents us from seeing what is going on. *Global Myopia* is a work within the field of art and representation, which moves away from pornographic and strident monumentality in order to enter a scrupulously simplified formal universe. This enhanced austerity can help us review the mechanisms and effectiveness of representation and its very diverse choices, while at the same time, reconsider the possible options we can take, as an audience and as citizens. If already in the fifties and sixties, as we have seen, other artists were reflecting actively upon this, it is no small matter that half a century later, we continue to point to this pressing need that shifts in its appearance but involves the same collateral damage that was suspected then. This installation operates as a constructive denunciation that, a priori, lacks the least intensity and demands no definite outcome. *Global Myopia* is also an opportunity to display Maggi's work and make it more complex. At the same time, it is a unique occasion to analyse it from different perspectives and with different filters, such as those suggested in this paper and by the general curatorial concept that guides this edition of the biennial. The use of notions such as space, representation and time, make it possible to understand this unconventional expository device that the work of Marco Maggi entails. A reading can only occur by means of spatial displacement, physical proximity to the plane, a period of focusing that leads to a tour of the work, and time for understanding to enable the reading of an apparently elusive language. In *Global Myopia* we should perceive the exhibition space as a new experience involving our immersion in an expanded drawing that compels us to become its physical protagonists, and at the same time, turns us into the triggers for its reading. As Maggi's

interest focuses on the space between object and viewers, on the quality and intensity of their gaze, and on the time devoted to each act, space and time are not only the determining factors in the production of his proposal, but also determining elements so that in our role as viewers we are able to make any kind of analysis of this visual representation. The reshaping of a primary means such as drawing, and the physical and temporal implications that Maggi confers upon our perception of it, come together to promote a political reflection that would appear to be impossible to achieve on the basis of abstraction. *Global Myopia* pushes us to look far beyond pencil and paper. In fact, to look very far beyond, and far beyond the prosaic appearance of things, as Walter Benjamin put it, beyond the most romantic meaning of perception, which prevents us from finding beauty in simplicity, and beyond the profound blindness that prevents us from viewing the political world with the clarity we need.