

PIZZA

3

SEMESTRALE



Austria / Belgium / France / Germany 20 Euro
Italy / Netherlands UK 7.5
USA/Canada \$12.00





***"You want to see my curriculum? But... here, in front of everyone? I can't: there are ladies present!"
Totò (Antonio de Curtis)***

MARCO BELFIORE ITALIAN SOUVENIR

RICCARDO CONTI

Last spring, in the remains of a bourgeois apartment in the centre of Milan, transformed into an 'alternative' exhibition space, guests on arrival found themselves in front of a video-projection in which a decorator, busy whitewashing, declaimed at length in a sort of monologue-interview on themes pertaining to art, creativity, and above all, the Italian character.

The man in the video was Marco Belfiore, 'painter' by his own definition, as if to blend together in identical layers of paint the artistic sense of the word with the practical sense of the decorator's trade (a job which Belfiore does in real life).

There may be no better business card and artistic statement with which to present the imaginary and the themes contained in Belfiore's work: born of Neapolitan emigrants in Rovereto, after studying at the Fine Arts Academy in Carrara, he began his artistic vagabondage, with the ironic and also mysterious flair for personifying, almost as though it were a performance, the typically Italian 'art of making do'.

Since then, surpassing the definition of simple painter, Marco Belfiore has been creating designs and paintings, videos, performances, photography and organising collective exhibition projects involving other artists and friends. In each work, diverse elements are laid out in an atlas of signs and clichés that, with bitter-sweet irony, describe the bad habits and personal strategies typical not so much of Italians, but of a certain attitude inherent in the Italian character that has always mixed love and hate for one's own historic and cultural heritage with suspicion towards every dogma and institution.

Disenchantment with creativity and art itself; art which, Belfiore seems to suggest to us, if taken too seriously and consigned to self-celebration, is in danger of projecting a long shadow of banality, despite the lofty references and objectives that it intends to incarnate.

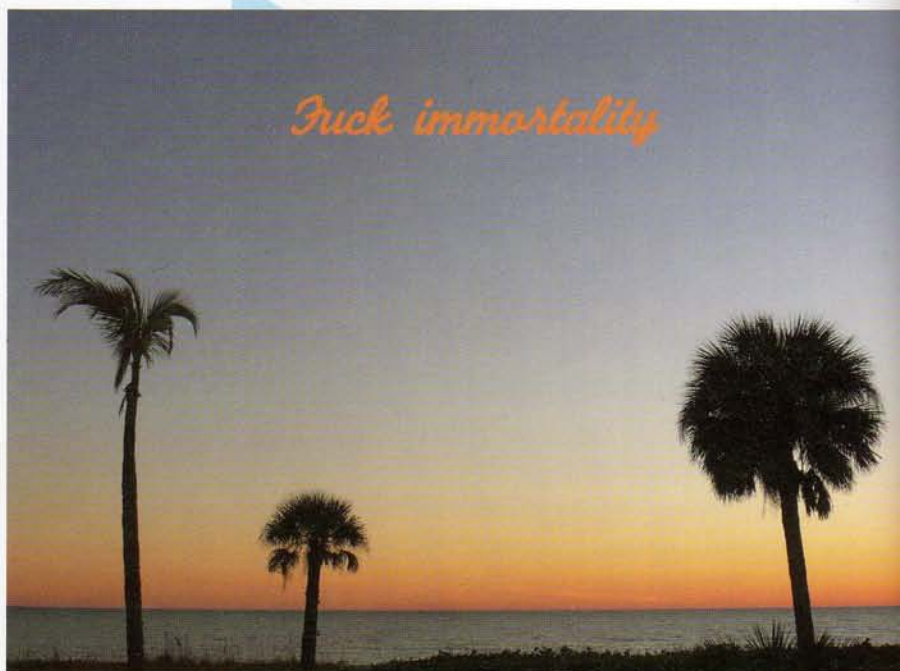
Projects are born from such considerations: amongst which the simple and apparently innocuous paintings that make up the "Oh! Les Italiens" project of 2007, in which every image seems to be a precipitate from popular Italian visual culture; from the tarot card illustration to the satirical cartoon from the daily paper. And yet the subtle references, just like the more striking ones, express Belfiore's attentive research and spirit of observation for those rhetorical aspects and attitudes that, most of the time, represent the tragic-comic part of Italian society. Within the same project, the artist conceived a performance, Solo's Song, entrusted to a friend; sixteen-year-old singer Joe Solo. "Armed with a guitar, a gravelly voice and a boundless ego, Joe Solo loves to deceive himself, the musical world, women and his friends. He changes his life and he continually reinvents himself". And with these words, visitors met for the first time the bizarre performer, somewhere between Bobby Solo and Lenny Kravitz, who entertains his audience by singing in a totally invented English; a home-grown surrogate imitating the ties and most superficial behaviour of a rock star, he transforms himself into a living lesson in that uniquely Italian annoyance for one's own territorial and cultural limits.

Another example of how the artist is capable of

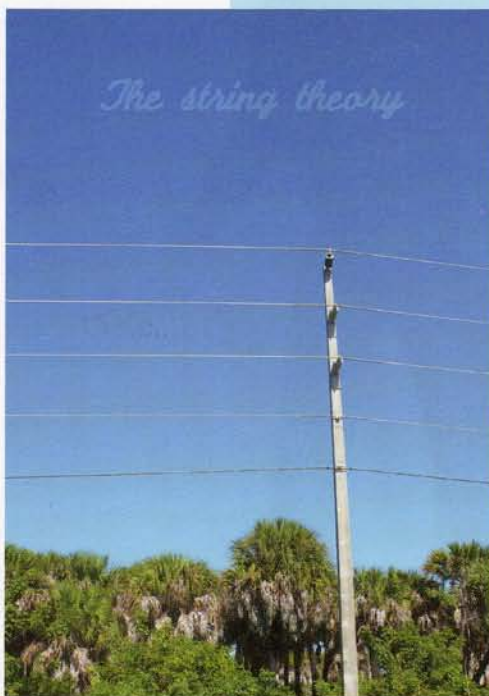
using the instrument of irony to detonate the commonplace and suggest new meanings, can be found in the 2010 series "Les Poissons sur Le Visage": a series of photomontages in which the popular expression "prendere a pesci in faccia" (editor's note: literally 'take fish in the face', meaning to treat someone rudely or unkindly) is applied literally by the artist, who overlays fish onto a pantheon of famous personalities, who are also in some way his cultural and artistic references. Beyond the provocation and the easy joke, the chimeras that derive from these surreal pairings evoke new interpretations, mysterious analogies and secret narrations that the bizarre fish-masks conceal and reveal at the same time.

Love of paradox, of the magical properties of words and the fragility of their meaning, is a constant element that is evidently in Belfiore's heart and seems to contain and support every other theme present. His work very often presents itself as a Dadaistic synthesis that reconciles Duchamp and Totò.

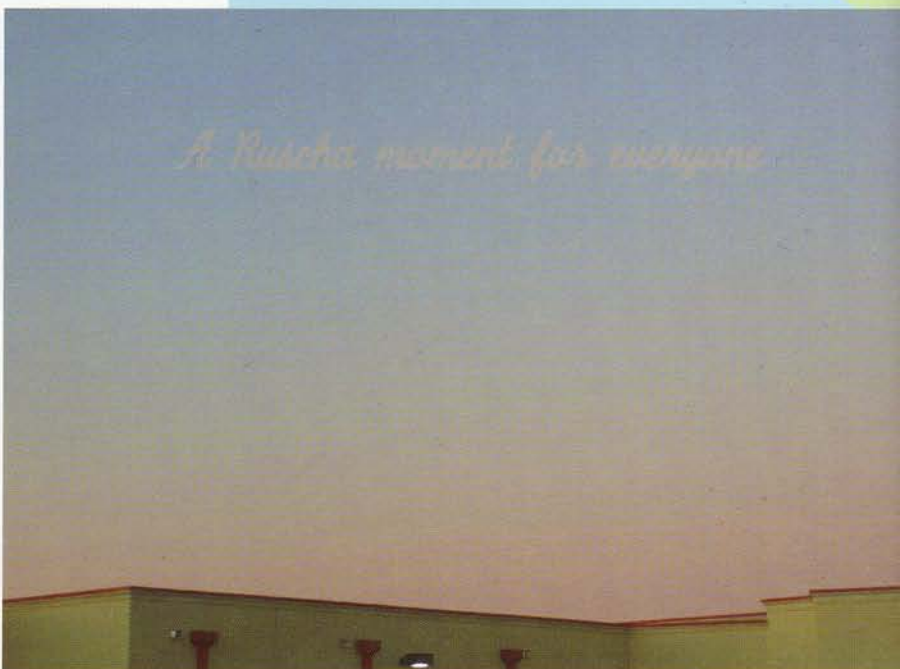
Games with words and the fascination for the cliché of popular and artistic imaginary return in his two latest personal shows, "Life is A Beach" (2010) and "Exotic Spleen" (2011): again, using different media, Marco Belfiore employs minimal visual directions to describe a disillusioned way of life that is constantly confronted with the 'fine' examples of art and thinking; a way of life that at the same time tries to sabotage and filter, from the most naïve and banal point of view there is: the tourist's. And it is "Exotic Spleen", the series of 'postcards' shot by the artist on a trip to Los Angeles, that flirts with that imaginary, in the attempt to identify the typicality of some of his own tourist shots. So we walk through a gallery of 'fake' landscapes, typical of the exoticism of the photographic viewpoint. But Belfiore gives them an absolutely elementary nature, as if to reduce them to their zero degree; transforming every individual visual souvenir into a minimal object, commenting on them with short slogans which, despite the poverty of the image, hint at a multiplicity of interpretations and a cultural density under the surface, that represents just as effectively the elusive essence of the Italian character.



FUCK IMMORTALITY
FROM THE SERIES "EXOTIC SPLEEN"
POSTER PRINTS ON PHOTO PAPER CMS



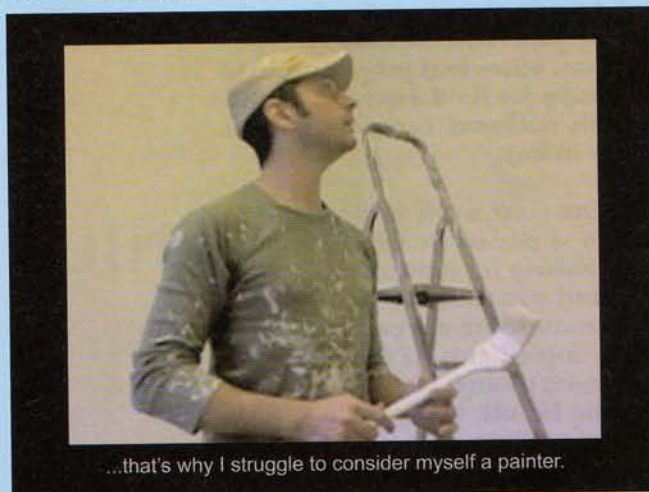
THEORY STRING 2011
FROM THE SERIES "EXOTIC SPLEEN"
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A RUSCHA MOMENT 2011
FROM THE SERIES "EXOTIC SPLEEN"
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STATEMENT 2009
FRAMES FROM VIDEO



...that's why I struggle to consider myself a painter.



For me contemporary painting is to painting like
American coffee is to Neapolitan espresso...



JOE SOLO SONG 2007
FINISAGGE PERFORMANCE FOR THE EXHIBITION
"OH LES ITALIENS" AT LE CASE D'ARTE MILANO

