

# Francesco Bocchini

## TESTA CARBONARA

### ...on the other hand

On the other hand, browsing through the catalogues accompanying Francesco Bocchini's exhibitions, one constant feature emerges: to all intents and purposes, the critical texts become an integral part of the work. Their typographic composition is drafted so as to foreground the 'legacy', the 'find', forming the backdrop to the series of reproductions of the works. They are something that the artist recoups, lays out and pastes in, proving that the interplay of the parts – between the various composers of visual and verbal artefacts – should not be interrupted. In short, even the critical text itself is put *on the table*.

That's right, 'on the table'. Indeed, on the basis of Georges Didi-Huberman's words in his *Atlas ou le gai savoir inquiet*, Bocchini's works belong to those kinds of visual operations by virtue of which "one decides to assemble a set of dissimilar things, through which to establish intimate and secret relationships between them." In short: it is not a 'painting' where the multiplicity is led back to a system, but a 'table' that triggers a device that dismantles, deconstructs the traditional order that binds objects, suggesting or stimulating a new logic of construction.

Kurt Schwitters had already listed the forms of access in the 1920s: "The word *Merz* essentially means the assembling of all possible materials for artistic purposes, and in a technical sense, the equal exploitation of individual materials in principle. (...) It does not matter whether the materials used have already been prepared for some purpose or not. The wheel of a carriage, wire mesh, string and wadding are elements equated with colour. The artist creates by choosing, dividing and deforming materials. The deformation of the materials can already occur through their distribution on the surface of the painting. It is further reinforced by dismembering, folding, covering or repainting" (Kurt Schwitters, 'Merz-Painting', *Myself and My Aims*).

Does Bocchini fit into this problematic context? We might try a methodological experiment. Let's pretend the twentieth century and its avant-gardes have all disappeared. That there is no longer a network of reference, a route which might allow us to trace back an artist's research to that already imagined, produced or disavowed by someone else.

Let us imagine that criticism did not come about to narrate the 'descendence' of a work, of research, from something we had already observed in the past.

Let us imagine that criticism is not written so as to reflect the writer's repertoire of historical knowledge, to lend weight to the one who informs us of the qualities of the artist before him.

Let us imagine that a distinction still exists between the 'criticism' and 'history' of art. Let us also imagine that Bocchini – just as he does typographically for each critical essay that accompanies the catalogues of his exhibitions – becomes the sole point of reference that observes, describes or that 'states' the world in front of him.

The artistic objects presented by Bocchini highlighted the aspect of ‘apparatuses’ that concern the body and its various activities. Apparatuses through which a form of expenditure is set in motion that has to do with the movement – without purpose and without end – of Technique.

The aim is to discharge energy, to move it from inside our body to outside. And we observe this not only in the mechanisms that Bocchini places on the table, but also with the collages. ‘Bachelor’ machines – as Harald Szeemann would call them – because they do not marry and do not generate anything. Like many things we now do as adults.

These are works that generate a trap, a detour, one which manages to overturn the direction and impact of the forces involved. Bocchini’s machinations – be they collage or assemblage – thus show the (unconscious?) cunningness implicit in the very invention of mechanisms. A cunningness that modern technology has tried to silence in favour of a project to dominate and possess nature.

So the works contain visual oddities that incorporate minute wordings in mysterious handwriting with small images – a drawing found on the ground, a fragment of a photograph – or they unfold in the great card game where strong, implacable, direct colour holds the upper hand. In the vitrines, the game reaches a higher dimension, one in which it is difficult to discern presence from reality: the artist’s thought is dominated by a sort of grandiose irony that you are unsure whether he wants to provoke the spectator or the artist who fills the spaces – he himself as the victim, shifting from provocateur to provoked – of forced but comprehensible conjunctions, all trying to rediscover the linearity of a meaning that breaks normal logical links.

Each image offers discoveries at different levels, from the impact of colour to the fascination of figures recovered from the depths of history; everyone may be put to the test, reaching their own level of legibility and understanding. Bocchini does not show his cards. He speaks very little, and almost always by showing another work, as if he were speaking in images, shunning superfluous explanation. Bocchini’s work is his own, weaving aspects of the world into a mysterious skein: all worlds, history, games, ‘found objects’, his ties, his land or revealing coherent thought, a gesture or memory.

If our experiment makes sense, if the artist reaches the point of ‘speaking’ like some anonymous machine, then the prodigious significance of Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus* – and to a certain extent also that of Bocchini’s own visual artefacts – is exactly that set out by Walter Benjamin: the angel of history has its gaze set on the past. But where it appears to us as a “chain of events, he sees a single catastrophe, which relentlessly piles up ruin upon ruin and casts them at his feet. But a storm is blowing from heaven which has caught his wings and which is so strong he can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly towards the future, on which he turns his back, while the pile of ruins rises up before him in the sky. What we call progress is this storm.”

**Beatrice Buscaroli**



STUDIO CENACCHI ARTE CONTEMPORANEA  
di Jacopo Cenacchi

Via Santo Stefano 63 40125 Bologna | +39 051 265517  
galleria@studiocenacchi.com | studiocenacchi.com  
da martedì a sabato 16,00 - 19,30 o su appuntamento